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ENTERED AT THE POST OFFICE AT NEW YORK, N. Y., AT SECOND CLASS MAIL RATES.

Vol. XXIII.

Published Every
Wednesday.

Beadle & Adams, Publishers,

98 WILLIAM STREET, N. Y., May 14, 1884.

Ten Cents a Copy.
\$5.00 a Year

No. 290

THE LOST CORVETTE; or, Blakeley's Last Cruise.

BY CAPTAIN FRED. WHITTAKER,

AUTHOR OF "NEMO, KING OF THE TRAMPS," "RED RUDIGER," "THE RUSSIAN SPY," "THE RED RAJAH," "THE IRISH CAPTAIN," "THE MAN IN RED," "DEATH'S HEAD CUIRASSIERS," "PHANTOM KNIGHTS," ETC., ETC.



"REMEMBER THE GUERRIERE! DOWN WITH THE BRITISH!"

The Lost Corvette;

OR,

BLAKELEY'S LAST CRUISE.

A True Story of an Irish-American
Sailor in 1814.

BY CAPT. FRED'K WHITTAKER,

AUTHOR OF "THE THREE FRIGATES," "THE
SAUCY JANE, PRIVATEER," "THE FOG-
DEVILS," "THE FLYING DUTCH-
MAN OF 1880," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE FAUGH-A-BALLAGH.

A TEARING northwest gale was driving the spray from the broad Atlantic into the eyes of the watch on deck of the fishing-lugger Faugh-a-Ballagh, as she dashed through the waves.

Such a gale, on the coast of Europe, is a very different thing from the same gale on the American coast. Here, we are used to associate the idea of a "northwester" with a clear sky and a pitiless cold, that comes howling from the Western prairies and blows off-shore all the time; while, on the other side of the Atlantic, the very reverse is the case.

The Faugh-a-Ballagh was covered with the driving mists from the Gulf Stream, that shows its influence in warming the waters on the west coast of Ireland. The sky was covered with a mass of ragged gray clouds, all torn and dirty looking, with little light, as they went scudding across the face of the heavens, like frightened sheep before a ravening wolf.

The lugger was of that kind among fishing-boats, in possession of a deck, with quarters for her crew. She had two masts, that carried large lug-sails; while a little spar, that rejoiced in the name of the "jigger," supported over the extreme stern a little sail of its own, only useful when the vessel tacked.

Her watch on deck was confined to the gray-headed owner, Captain Matthew Blake, of Galway; while Tim Bodkin, his first mate and factotum in general, was steering, and the rest of the crew, consisting of Teddy French, Pat Lynch, Florence McCarty and Jim Morrissey, were below, ready to come on deck whenever their services were wanted, but not particularly anxious to face the cold, damp gale that had driven Blake and Bodkin to their pea-jackets, oilskins and "sou'westers," from under which they sullenly contemplated the scud as it drove across the heavens, while they conversed together in low tones.

"And it's goin' to be a wild night, Tim," said Blake, sententiously, as he dashed the spray from his eyes with the sleeve of his coat.

Tim only nodded, as he gave the tiller a push to windward; for the little lugger "carried a weather-helm," as it is called, and needed constant watchfulness.

"And it's lucky that the boat's got plenty of say-room," the captain continued. "The boys might have sint us at a better time, I'm thinkin', Tim."

Tim shifted the helm again, and replied, dryly:

"The Sassenach won't wait, Mat, and why should we wait, ayther? It's the time fur the boys to strike, whin the ould harridan's at her worst. An' they say that, what wid Boney and the Yankees, she's elane at her wit's ind fur money and min."

Matthew Blake laughed rather bitterly, as he said:

"Divil a man need she want, while ould Ireland is to the fore. It's never the time I saw England in trouble, she didn't have the Irish to fight for her. And don't I mind the days of 'Ninety-eight? Sure it was the Irish killed the Irish, and will be so, till the Sassenach's gone for ever."

He shook his fist vindictively toward the east, where the shores of England lay, out of sight, behind the curtain of mist, and added:

"'Tis there they are to-day, bad-luck to 'em! An Irishman heads the army that's b'atin' Boney, and Irishmen are in ivery ridgmint that's in the service; and what's the use of our comin' out here, to find a Yankee ship, that no man knows anythin' about, 'cept that she's comin' to barry the English coast, till she gits tuk, like the last."

The lugger at this point shoved her nose into the middle of a wave that came curling over the bow, and shipped such a quantity of water that Blake exclaimed:

"'Tis no use, Tim. The hooker was niver meant to go to say in weather like this, and we may as well turn back."

Tim Bodkin shook himself from the water that had dashed over him, and said to his chief:

"We'll bear up, av ye say the word, captain; but what'll the boys say, av we come back and niver see the ship that's come all the way across the salt say to meet us? We'll be disgraced intirely. And there isn't a revenue cutter to be seen, and the lugger can stand more than this, tin times over."

Matthew Blake said nothing more; but set his face to the southwest, and peered through the mist in silence for some minutes. At last he said, slowly:

"And it ain't a Blake as will turn his back whin the boys want him to go to a place, Tim; but what are we goin' to do, in the world, av she don't come at all? We can't go huntin' over the ocean fur her, like a hound after a fox. Av she don't come in sight in half an hour, I'm thinkin' we'd better go back."

Tim made no answer but to throw the bows of the lugger away from another wave that threatened a repetition of the last ducking, and the Faugh-a-Ballagh dashed on like a panther (for she was of that sharp and graceful build, that reminded the beholder of a panther). Before the little craft could go another mile in the gale, the captain espied, through the driving mists, the dim outlines of a ship ahead, and cried to Tim, in a tone of great relief:

"And ther's the cr'ater at last! Did ye iver see the likes of that, now! And she has come, whin I thought it was all a trick."

Sure enough, a ship it was, ahead of them; and she seemed to be a swift one. She was "close-hauled on the port tack"—that is to say, had the wind on her "port" or left side, at an acute angle to her bows, so as to make her progress through the waves by an oblique advance, and was stripped to her topsails and courses, her long, naked spars standing out above the swelling canvas below, with a graceful effect.

She came driving down on the little lugger, as if she, also, was bent on a meeting, and, before she had been in sight for twenty minutes was abreast of the fishing-craft, and had backed her maintopsail, becoming stationary, to windward of the lugger, which thus found itself in comparatively calm water, under the lee of the great hull of the ship.

Then it became apparent that the stranger was a ship-of-war, from the uniforms of men, who looked over her sides, and a hail came down to Matthew Blake:

"Lugger ahoy! Is that the Faugh-a-Ballagh?"

Captain Matthew Blake looked up at the towering bulk alongside him, his face beaming with an expression very different to that which it had worn for the last hour, as he shouted out:

"And is it yerself, Master Jack! And it's a proud day that sees ye here again, wid a good ship under ye."

The answer seemed to be all that was required; for he heard some one else shout, on the ship:

"Stand by to heave a rope to the lugger. It's all right."

Then the great ship came drifting down on the little lugger, so close that there was danger that they might collide, and a rope came flying through the air to the decks of the Faugh-a-Ballagh, which was neatly caught by Blake, who called down the fore-hatch to his crew to "come out and help," in the democratic style that prevails on fishing-boats. They came tumbling up to his assistance, with more promptitude than might have been expected, and, in a short time after, the lugger was being towed at the end of a long hawser, with her sails down, while the large ship was standing off to sea again, and Captain Blake was making his preparations to go aboard her, by no means an easy task in such a sea as was running.

But the fishermen were used to going out in just such seas, and before long the skipper of the Faugh-a-Ballagh stood on the deck of the ship, shaking hands with a young man, whom he addressed as "Master Jack," evidently full of joy at the meeting.

CHAPTER II.

MASTER JACK.

THE face of the young man who was shaking hands with Matthew Blake was handsome and intelligent, bearing the unmistakable stamp of the race from which he sprung.

His dark gray eyes, with long lashes, were of that kind which—as the Celtic phrase it—are "laid in wid a dirty finger." His prominent brow, square jaw, and rather high cheek-bones, together with the clustering curls of dark soft hair that fell on either side of his face, proclaimed him an Irishman by race, whatever the place of his birth.

He wore the uniform of the British navy, as did the rest on deck, and, from the way in which they gave way before him he was evidently the chief in command in the ship.

The captain of the lugger kept shaking hands with him, as if he did not know when to stop, repeating all the time:

"And it's meself that's proud to see ye, Master Jack, after all these years, wid a ship of yer own. And what's her name, sur?"

Master Jack smiled, as he answered:

"And it's a good enough name for her, Mat. And what would ye think we should call her?"

Mat thought a moment and replied soberly:

"And sure I c'u'dn't say, Master Jack. Is it the Scourge of England, or the Terror of the Say? Sure she's a purty ship, and sails like a witch."

"What is it that stings hard, and nobody can catch it, Mat?" asked the young commander, with the same smile.

Mat scratched his head and finally said:

"And it's meself don't know, Master Jack, unless it's a bay or a wasp. W'u'd ye call her the Bay?"

Master Jack laughed outright, while subdued smiles appeared on the faces of more than one of the officers around, who were amused at the simplicity of the fisherman.

"No," replied the young commander. "We don't call her the Bee, for 'honey is not in our line. It is our business to sting and we do it with all our might, Mat. This is the Wasp, and we are going to show the proud Sassenach that Ireland can sting, from a long way off. It is not because they have killed, starved, and disgraced us for centuries, that we are going to give it up so easily. They killed my father, and the son has come to get his revenge. And he is going to have it, Mat; he is going to have it!"

The eyes of the young man flashed fire as he spoke, and there was more than one face, among those around him that expressed the same feelings of anger and longing for revenge, displayed on that of the commander.

As for Mat Blake, he seized the hand of the young chief again, and wrung it hard as he ejaculated:

"And it's niver a Blake that'll go back on a Blake, yer honor. It was the Blake of Castle Blake, was the life of 'Ninety-eight, and it's his own son that's comin' back to his own place to make it hot for the Sassenachs."

Then "Master Jack," as he had been called by the fisherman, turned to the officers around him, and said:

"Gentlemen, this is my cousin, Matthew Blake of Galway, and he has come to give us important intelligence from the enemy. Mr. Winthrop will take charge of the deck, while I am down in the cabin. If you see a sail, call me at once, for anything in these seas is sure to be a foe."

With a slight gesture of dismissal he turned away, and went into the cabin, while the boat's crew, that had brought Mat to the side of the ship, were taken to the fore-castle of the Wasp (as the captain had declared her name to be) and entertained by the sailors as if they were welcome and long expected visitors.

In the cabin of the Wasp, meanwhile, the scene was very different, as the young captain, as soon as he had entered the room, the door of which was guarded by a sentry, said to the soldier:

"Don't disturb me, unless it is a sail. *Nothing else, mind.*"

The sentry, who wore the red coat of the British marines, saluted by slapping his piece, as he answered stiffly:

"Very good, sir."

Then Master Jack and Matthew Blake went into the cabin, and the first thing that the young man did was to throw his arms around the neck of the old fisherman, and say, in a broken tone, as if struggling with some powerful emotion:

"Mat, Mat, what a difference from the last time we met."

The old fisherman drew his sleeve across his eyes, with a hasty motion, as he answered:

"Don't be thinkin' of it, Master Jack. Sure the Blake of Castle Blake c'u'dn't be disgraced by any dirty thief of an Englishman, that iver wore a red coat. 'Tis the name of a hero he got, and what matter is it how a man dies, as long as he gets that? The thing to ask now, is, what does yer honor want of me, and why did ye send for me?"

The young captain drew closer to the old fisherman, to ask in his turn:

"Does any one know me, do you think, Mat-thew?"

"Sorra wan of thim, yer honor. They think that ye wint dead, like the rest, and that the Blakes of Castle Blake are all gone. Av I hadn't known that ye were aboard, I w'u'dn't have known ye nayther."

The young man smiled faintly as he listened to the words, for they seemed to rouse in him all sorts of memories, not entirely pleasant, and he answered:

"Ay, ay, Mat, I don't doubt I'm changed. I've had enough to change me, God knows. Nursed, with the hate of England in my very blood, how can I help but fight her, as long as there is a breath in my body. But I am wasting time. Tell me the news from home, Mat. Tell me how they all are, and what are the prospects of a rising?"

Mat shook his head sadly.

"Sorra chance, do I see, yer honor, unless Boney bates the duke in Spain; and, from what they tell me, he's on his last legs, that samo Boney. It's all the time they do be talking at home of the great victories, and the Connaught Rangers, and givin' us a fine palaver, and lutt'ring us all up. And sure, though the poor cr'aters know, at the bottom of their souls, that it's all blarney; they like it all the same, and they w'u'dn't rise fur King Brian Boru himself. No, no, Master Jack, I w'u'dn't like to be givin' ye hopes that wadn't be made sartainties, and that's what's the matter. Ye can't depind on the boys to rise, till they see a good chance."

Master Jack listened to his friend thoughtfully, and asked:

"But suppose that they saw a good chance. Suppose that they saw an army of Americans, landed on the coast, and an American fleet on the seas, to support it, wouldn't they rise then?"

Mat leaned forward, with an earnest look on his face, as he asked:

"An' is it likely that we'll have anything of the sort, Master Jack? An' are they comin'?"

"They may, if we are careful and play our cards well. But it would not do to send an army across the seas, unless we are quite sure that it would be helped by another here."

The honest face of the fisherman flushed, as he said:

"An' it's meself that thinks, Master Jack, that av ye were to land an army in Ireland, and ask the people to rise, they'd do it, av they saw a ghost of a chance. But whin we remember 'Ninety-eight, and the bangin's and murders, it makes the best of us think twice, before we lift a hand ag'in' the Government, where the spies can see us. It's a hard thing, Master Jack, avick, to come home some fine mornin' and find the house, that ye lift so snug at bedtime, all a pile of ashes, and the wife and childer sittin' by the roadside, cryin' wid the cold and hunger. Ye were too young, whin ye was taken off, Master Jack, to remember all that, but I'm not that young, or that old, but I mind it well. No, sir, ye can't depend on the boys till the battle's won; so don't build any hopes on it, Master Jack."

Master Jack listened, and nodded thoughtfully.

"'Tis well, Mat. We're not likely to see it, unless my mission is much more successful than I have any means of anticipating, at present. Our country is but a little thing yet, and it will have to grow a good deal, before it can tackle the British lion, in a square fight. But there is one thing we can do, and we have done it, for some time, with more or less success; that is, to fight his ships on an equality, and to whip them, ship to ship. Now tell me, Mat, what men-of-war have you seen, around Galway, this summer?"

The fisherman reckoned over his fingers.

"There's the Reindeer first, yer honor. She's a purty brig as iver was sailed and it's lord somebody is the captain. And what was the that name, to be sure? It was something about Brading, yer honor, I'm thinking."

"About what, Mat?"

"About good brading and purliteness, yer honor," responded the fisherman, scratching his head. "What d'ye call it—oh, ay, I mind now—it's Manners, Lord Jack Manners, they call him. That's the first, sur, and then there's the Avon and the Pelican, and a host of other ships and cutters, that goes prowlin' about, for all the world like cats in the back yards, huntin' up each other."

"Where was the Reindeer, when you last saw her?" asked Master Jack, sharply, with a look in his eyes as if he knew the name.

"Off Galway, yer honor, where she had put in for fresh mate, for the officers. She wint away before we did, and I heard that she was to cruise in the chops of the channel, lookin' fur Yankee ships."

Master Jack nodded thoughtfully.

"Did you hear any talk of whether they suspected that this ship, or any other, was coming, Mat?"

"Sorrah a word, yer honor; and not a wan of them thinks that it's the Blake of Castle Blake, that's comin' to wake 'em up. I'll swear to that. And av I was yer honor, it's into the bay I'd go, as bold as blazes, and no one 'ud know ye from Adam."

Master Jack started slightly, as he heard the advice, and he asked:

"Was there any ship-of-war in the bay, when you left it, Mat?"

"Divil a wan, yer honor."

"And do you think I could see my grandfather, if I got into the house safely?" asked the young man, with a nervous tremor that he did not seek to conceal.

Mat seemed to be thinking deeply over the question, as if he had expected it, but was unwilling to answer it. It was some time before he said anything, and when he did, it was with an air of doubt and hesitation, in marked contrast with his usual bluff demeanor. He shifted about on his chair likewise, as he answered:

"Master Jack, I'll not deny that the ould gintleman asked me to git ye to come in, av it was only fur a moment, that he might see ye wance, before he died, and that was the message, I was wantin' to give ye. But sure, what does it matter what the poor cr'ater wants, now? It's not long he is for this world, and whin he dies, he won't be any better off, for havin' seen ye. It's a mighty quare place fur ye to go, Master Jack, and that's what's the r'ason I didn't tell ye, before. Ye'll have to take yer life in yer hand, av ye go ashore in Ireland, now. Sure the people is all crazy wid the news of Boney, and the victories. It's not as it used to be, in 'Ninety-eight, whin the boys was ready fur fun, all the days in the week, and no work to be had fur love or money. Now

the war's taken the best of them, and what's left won't fight."

Master Jack rose from the seat, from which he had been questioning the fisherman, and said, in a resolute way:

"Sink or swim, I'm going to try it, Mat. When the head of the house calls me, it is my duty to obey; and, if I take my life in my hand, it is no more than I have done, many a time before, for less cause. I will go and see my grandfather."

Mat seemed to be half-gratified and half-afraid of the result; for he said:

"Don't be resky, Master Jack. Sure it isn't a matter of life and death to see him, yet awhile. But av ye feel ye must, thin I'll tell ye what ye do. Come aboard the Faugh-a-Ballagh, and we'll go into the bay, as n'ate as anything; and sorrah a bit the wiser will any of the gaugers be, when they see ye, for we'll have Tim Bodkin here, and ye can be Tim yerself."

Master Jack only shook his head as he said:

"I have a better plan than that, Mat. I shall take the Wasp in, with all sail set, and all I want is a signal that there is no man-of-war in the bay."

"And sure that's 'asy enough," responded Mat. "I'll take the boat, forinst ye, into the bay; and, av I foind that there's anything there that might hurt ye, I'll light the ould beacon, that hasn't been lit sence 'Ninety-eight. How'll that do, yer honor?"

"Famously, Mat," was the reply in a tone of voice that showed the satisfaction of Master Jack. "If I can only get a chance to play half the mischief that was played here by Paul Jones, thirty-five years ago, I shall be satisfied. 'Twould be a proud day, when I put my name alongside his, Mat."

Mat crossed himself piously as he ejaculated:

"The saints have ye in their keeping, Master Jack. Ye'll do it yet, I believe. And after all, he was not a r'ale Blake, of Castle Blake."

CHAPTER III.

CASTLE BLAKE.

AWAY from the shores of the Bay of Galway, in the midst of the moors, stood a large pile of buildings, more than half ruinous. Around it stretched the wilds of Connemara, bare plains, where the salt wind, from the sea, moaned across the turf, and the only live thing seen was an occasional plover, or a gull which had wandered in from the coast, and was hunting for something to eat, which it found not.

In the midst of these wild moors, the pile of building, of which we have spoken, had a cheering effect, as the only object of interest in the whole landscape. Around it flourished trees, when there were no trees anywhere else; and the lowing of cattle, with the occasional neigh of a horse, from under the shelter of the out-houses that surrounded it, showed the presence of animals, as well as human beings, at Castle Blake.

To one who came close to it, there was an air of desolation and mourning about the whole place, in good keeping with the wild and melancholy landscape around the house. Once it had been inclosed with a wall; but the greater part of this had fallen, and there were traces, in places, that this wall had been battered down by violence, in some former time; for more than one old rusty cannon-ball, half hidden in the piles of rubbish in the court, showed where Cromwell's men had held riot, in the old days.

At the remains of the old gateway stood an old man, who had the appearance of being a part of the ruin, so worn and gray was he, and he was peering under his closed hands over the moors at the setting sun, when he uttered a low cry and exclaimed:

"And they're comin' at last."

He had seen, at a distance from the house, a man on horseback, with a boy running in front of the horse, that told of a traveler and his "gossoon," who had crossed the bogs from Galway, to visit Castle Blake.

Old Barney O'Toole had been huntsman for the castle in the days before the rebellion, when the master of that once imposing edifice had "kept the hounds," and he had ever after retained the old red coat and corduroys that marked his office in the days when horses were as plentiful in the stables of Castle Blake as in the tents of an Arab encampment.

Barney was glad when he saw a horse coming to the castle, for it was the pleasure of his life to attend to horses, and he did not mind the lack of dignity that it implied in him for the huntsman to be officiating as hostler.

The stranger who rode up to the door of the castle was apparently a soldier, for he had the peculiar air of stiff authority habitual on the faces of those who are used to lording it over their fellows, and he wore a black stock, in those days held sacred to the military profession. He was mounted on a hack-horse from one of the town stables, and followed by little Terence McCoy, who had trotted all the way from the town of Galway that morning, over the bogs of Connemara, at the rate of ten miles an hour, "without turning a hair," in jockey phrase.

The stranger rode up and threw his bridle to Terence, while he said to old Barney:

"Is the Blake at home to day, daddy?"

Barney eyed him all over, in a singular, furtive way, for the other had the look of a Briton, and Barney hated an Englishman as he hated poison. The old man looked as sour as he possibly could, as he replied:

"And he is, sir; but the doctor says that his honor must not be disturbed by anybody, for he's very sick, sir. Av ye'll give yer card, sir, ye can see Father Maginnes, sir, and that same's his honor's confessor."

The traveler twitched his face in a curious way. Barney could see, now that he looked at him closer, that he was about forty, and that he wore spectacles, though he had such a military air.

"I don't want to see Father Tom," he absently answered, as if he were thinking of something else altogether. "I want to see the Blake himself."

"Then yer honor'll have to wait," said Barney, coldly, getting in the way of the traveler as he dismounted from his horse and advanced to open the door of the inner house, unbidden—a thing which was to Barney's eyes as near high treason as anything could be done by human being. "It's the orders of the doctor that no one's to see him till he comes again. And I'll have to send for Father Tom to see ye. Av it's business, his riverence will attend to it."

The traveler turned to the obstinate old man and said to him in a more coaxing tone:

"Come, come, old man; I want to see the Blake. If he knew I was here he would be half crazy to see me. Let me in now, and here is a guinea for your pains."

Barney's eyes flashed as he saw the bright gold which the stranger showed him, for the temptation was a great one. The old man had not seen a guinea for ever so long, and the sight dazzled him. Nevertheless, he turned his head resolutely away from the sight and said, in the same obstinate way as before:

"Ye can't see him, sir, and that's flat. He don't want to see any of the cursed Sassenachs that killed his son and ruined Castle Blake. I'll go call Father Tom, av ye please; but ye don't stir another step that way. D'ye hear that, sir?"

The stranger, who was a tall, powerfully-built man, who looked as if he could have pitched the huntsman over the roof of the barn with ease, nevertheless paused at the resolute attitude of the plucky little man, and said, in a manner that betokened amusement:

"Why, confound it, Barney, you don't appear to remember me at all, and you are the same old Barney as ever. Let me in, and don't make an ass of yourself any more. You'll be sorry for it, if I have to knock you down, you know, you old sinner."

In a moment the peppery old man had jumped back to the lodge from which he had issued, and confronted the other with a formidable cudgel of the real Irish blackthorn, in his hand, with which he began to dance back and forth in front of the stranger, singing, in a low, maundering sort of tone:

"With that he gave his opponent a stroke upon the nose.

From which the gore, in streams of red, most beautifully flows;

Aha, he cries, my gallant boy, with you that don't agree!

Take that, bold Cooper, to remimber brave old Donnelly-y-y-y."

There was something so ludicrous in the absolutely serene courage of the little old huntsman, as he flourished his shillalah close to the nose of a man big enough to eat him up, that the stranger, who for a moment had frowned, as if he were angry, threw off his ill-humor and burst out laughing loudly, in the midst of which he was surprised by the voice of some one behind him, saying gravely:

"Barney O'Toole, aren't ye ashamed of yerself to be goin' on, at your time of life, like that? Put down yer stick, and bould yer whist."

Barney and the stranger turned instinctively at the words and saw, by the old door of the principal building that answered to the hall, a venerable man of ecclesiastical aspect, who had on the long cassock of the priest then in common use all over Europe, and was scanning the stranger closely through his spectacles.

Barney seemed to be a little asbamed to have been caught, at his time of life, shaking a stick and singing the ballad of "Cooper and Donnelly," so he quietly put the formidable blackthorn behind him, and slipped away, with the remark to the stranger:

"And that's Father Tom, sir."

The stranger advanced to meet the ecclesiastic, who, on his part, greeted him with a smile, as he said:

"You are welcome to Castle Blake, sir; what is left of it. You will please to walk in, and we will see what we can do for ye. We can offer ye some good shooting; but the fox-hounds are all gone, sir; and it's little the sheriff left us, whin he put in the last distrass. Come in, sir; come in."

Father Tom Maginnes led the way into a large and dilapidated hall, where the stains on the walls showed that the rain found frequent admission; took him into a room, where a fire

of black bog-oak was burning, in a fireplace that would have made the mouth of an aesthete of the present day water, for longing of its quaint picturesqueness, and planted him down in a large chair, by a table, by the side of a large jug, that was emitting a strong odor of whisky and water, with a little sugar, the whole at a boiling heat, before he addressed a single question to him.

Even then, he poured out a brimming tumbler of the punch, and set it before his guest, before he spoke.

"Your very good health, sir, and now may I ask to what the castle is indebted for the pleasure of this visit?"

The stranger favored him with a scrutinizing glance, before he answered, which he did with great deliberation, and a singular look in his eyes, as if something amused him greatly.

"I should have thought you could have guessed that, Father Tom. It's not so many years ago you told a young man that if he ever had the opportunity, and didn't do what he could to kill an Englishman, he was no true son of Ireland. Ah, Father Tom, you were of a quick temper in those days, and how you *did* hate the Crown! I have half a mind to expose you now to the Castle, at Dublin; and then you know what would happen to you."

Father Tom looked at his guest in a manner that showed he was both mystified and frightened, as he faltered:

"And your honor is jokin', of coorse. Sure there never was a man that was more loyal than meself, sir; and if ye're from Dublin—"

"That's where I am from," the other replied, in the same half-jesting and half-earnest tone; "and I have come to see the Blake, to find out whether he has heard anything about his son, or rather his grandson, who went away to America. They tell me, father, that he has gone into the enemy's navy, and that he has come here, to emulate the career of the pirate, Paul Jones. Have you heard anything of it?"

Father Tom drew in his breath with a sort of frightened look, as he replied:

"No, sir, nothing at all, nothing at all, I assure you. I have not heard of the unfortunate young man. Surely you can cherish no malice against him, can you? He was a baby when his father was executed for treason; and his poor mother died of grief when she heard the news. Is not that enough, but the Castle at Dublin must come to his grandfather, in his old age and almost entire helplessness, to hound him for the actions of a young man who is no longer under the jurisdiction of the British Crown?"

"Pardon me," interrupted the stranger briskly. "Once a subject, always a subject, is good old common law doctrine, isn't it, father? If this young Blake comes back, he will put his head into the lion's mouth. I want to know if you have heard anything about his coming back yet. That's all."

Father Tom turned paler than before, as he said hastily:

"How should I know anything about his movements, sir? He is in America, I understand."

The stranger suddenly rose from his seat, showing the frame of a man of great strength, and approached the priest till they were less than two feet apart, when he asked him, in low and very significant tones, with his eyes fixed on those of the ecclesiastic:

"Will you swear, on your oath as a priest, that you have not heard a word from Johnston Blake this year?"

"Why, how should I hear from him, sir?" the priest protested, with a subtle evasion of the real question that the other noted in an instant. "How could I receive news from him, sir, when, as I said before, I do not know where he is, and whether he be alive or dead?"

The stranger kept his hand on the shoulder of the old priest, where he had laid it in the act of questioning him, and continued:

"He is here on the coast somewhere; and I have been sent to look for him. If he comes inside the gates of this place, and you will give me a signal, which I shall explain to you, I will assure you the reward of twenty thousand pounds."

The priest looked at the stranger, as of old Hazeel might have looked on Elisha, as he asked "if he was a dog to do such a thing," but his only answer to the proposition was:

"I have told you, sir, that I do not know what has become of the poor young gentleman whom you mention, but this you may be sure of, that, if he enters this house, all the power of the Dublin Castle is not enough to make me betray the heir of the castle, the man who will soon be the Blake himself."

The stranger started slightly as he asked: "What do you mean by that, sir? what do you mean?"

"I mean, sir," replied the priest solemnly, "that, before many hours are over, the poor old man, whose life, for so many years now, has been a scene of never-ending misery, will be no more, and that the exiled grandson will be the heir of Castle Blake, if he chooses to come and claim his inheritance."

His words produced an immediate and surprising effect on the stranger.

He released his hold on the priest's shoulder, and, with a quick motion of both hands, stripped off the disguise that had hitherto hidden him from the other. The spectacles that had shielded his eyes were thrown down; the grizzled wig disappeared; while, as soon as these artificial aids were removed, the wrinkles that had marked his face were easily seen to be made up with paint.

Father Tom watched the process, as it went on, with great wonder, till the stranger turned round on him and asked, in a tone of voice that he in vain tried to render steady:

"And don't you know me yet, father?"

The old priest stared at him for several moments, as if he had seen a ghost; then he started up and hugged the young man in his arms, sobbing as if his heart would break, and muttering:

"Oh, Master Jack, Master Jack; and why didn't ye come before? It's too late, alannah, too late. He's going fast."

"Take me to him, then," replied the young man hurriedly. "If there is no time to lose, let us be quick. I have come to receive the last words of the head of my race, and if my foes knew that I was here, my father's doom would await me, no doubt. Take me to my grandfather at once, father."

The old priest hesitated not a moment. It was nothing to him that he could not explain how the heir of the castle, whom he had thought thousands of miles away, had suddenly turned up in the midst of his foes, to visit the last of his race. Father Tom Maginness had been brought up as a retainer of the old family, in which his father before him had been a tenant, and to which he owed the charity which had made him a student and priest, when all the rest of his family were peasants. He led the way to the sick-chamber.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEATH OF A PATRIOT.

In the only room, in the old pile of buildings known as "Castle Blake," that could be spoken of as comfortable, because it had whole roof and walls and was weather-tight all through, lay an old man with a venerable face and long white hair, the pallor of death on his features.

Around the room were hung mementoes of the past glories of the house of Blake. Portraits of gentlemen in the costumes of the reigns of the Stuarts, and one of a knight in armor, hung on the walls, while the swords of the ancestors of the family, from the basket-hilted rapier of the seventeenth century to the clumsy and inconvenient hanger that prevailed in the times of the American Revolution, showed that soldiers had been in the family for many years.

Opposite to the face of the dying man hung one portrait, which had a particularly ghastly effect in the place in which it was.

It represented a young man in the dress of the French Revolution, with powdered hair, handsome and smiling in appearance; but the legend written under the picture was what made it so ghastly.

Right across the foot of the painting, which was nearly life size, ran the inscription:

"JOHNSTON BLAKE, hung 1798."

While beneath this was placed, carefully framed and glazed, a cheap wood-cut of a galloos with a man hanging thereon, around which was printed:

"The hanging of Johnston Blake, the traitor, at the castle. God save the King!"

It was on this picture that the eyes of the dying man were resting, and his look was that of a fond affection no shame could disturb, for he kept murmuring to himself as he lay:

"Not long now, Jack—not long now."

The setting sun was shining in at the window, and the light was in his eyes, but he did not seem to be sensible of it till he heard a step by the bedside, and Father Tom came in by him, to say quietly:

"The young Blake has come, sir."

In a moment the eyes of the old man had opened widely, and he turned them with an expression of profound thankfulness on the figure of the young man who had been called "Master Jack," who came into the room and stood by the bed, looking down on the sufferer with his eyes full of tears, but with an air of solemnity that did not allow him to let them fall to distress the other.

The Blake stretched out his hand with a strength that was astonishing, considering his near approach to death, and said:

"I knew ye would come, boy. The Blakes of the castle are going down to the grave fast, but they are not dead yet."

The young man cast himself down on his knees by the bedside, and buried his face in the bedclothes as if he found it impossible to stop the tears that would flow, and the old man patted his head as it lay there with a slight, caressing motion, as he murmured:

"Don't weep, boy; don't weep. 'Twill be over soon, but the time is coming when you will be glad of it."

He paused and seemed to be gathering strength to go on. Presently he said in a faint tone, that showed how his strength was failing:

"Jack, look over at your father's picture."

Then, as the young man by the bedside raised his head and looked at the portrait of the man who had been hanged, it might be seen that there was a wonderful likeness between them.

"The English hung your father, Jack, and attainted all his family from him down. They left me, because I had always been faithful to the British crown. Now the Blakes of the castle will be no more. The old place will go. The king will take it, or some of his favorites, and there will no more be heard of the name that was once so proud. What are you going to do, my boy, now that it is all gone?"

Johnston Blake raised his head, and looked at the dying man with a gaze that showed his spirit was not of the kind that quails before difficulty or danger, as he answered:

"What is gone is gone. If I could get it back by denying what my father did, I would not do it. The Blakes of Castle Blake may be gone; but the Blake that once swept the sea, and made the name famous forever, is alive yet, and will never die."

The old man smiled faintly as he listened to the proud words, and turned to Father Tom, who was listening to the conversation.

"Ye hear him; ye hear him? He is his father's son," was all he said.

Young Blake threw up his head proudly.

"I am my father's son, and the English killed my father. They have done all they could to disgrace his son, and they are going to do all they can in future. Tell me, grandfather, who was the man who gave the information that hung my father? I have tried in vain to get it; but have never been able, since I was of age to ask."

The eye of the old man blazed up, as he answered:

"'Twas the Bad Manners, as they called him. He was the man, pretended to be a friend of your father, and betrayed him to the men who were hounding all Irishmen to their doom. 'Twas Lord Humphrey Manners, who is now the Duke of Rutland. If ever ye get a chance to strike at a Manners, remember that it was a Manners that got your father hung, and it was a Manners that stole his confidence and betrayed it."

Young Blake listened to the words, and said, slowly:

"I will not forget, you may be sure. What do you wish me to do, after you are gone? There is all this property of the family, that no one can take from us. Do you wish it to be left to go into the hands of the English?"

The old man cast a glance around the room, with the indifferent air of one to whom the near approach of death makes all things of small importance, and said:

"They're all gone, boy, and why should we be anxious to keep them in mind? The castle is gone with me, and the money was gone long ago. Let the name perish, and rise again with you, in the New World, so that men may forget there ever was a Blake of Castle Blake, and think only of the great Blake, when they mention the name."

The younger man bowed, as he heard the words of the older one, and replied quietly:

"You are the head of the house, and I am bound to obey your order. You say that it shall perish, and that the name of Blake shall no more be heard here. Be it so."

Then he added:

"Is there anything you would like me to know or do?"

The old squire seemed to be reflecting a minute, before he said anything in reply to the question of his descendant, and when he spoke, it was with an air as if he were trying to recall something that was past, and which his failing memory made difficult to bring back.

"Jack," he said, slowly, "there is something I want to tell you, and I cannot remember it exactly. It is about Ireland."

The face of the younger man lighted up at once, as he ejaculated:

"Ireland! I can tell what that is, at once, grandfather. You wish to remind me to love my country, and to strive for her freedom. You can be sure of that; sure of that."

The Blake listened to him with a faint smile, as he spoke; but as soon as the fiery young man had finished, the older one replied:

"Thank ye; you have reminded me of what I was forgetting, Jack. You are now in another country. You were driven there by misfortune; but, none the less, you have received kindness there, and owe it a debt. It is not for you to struggle for this country any longer. Let the dead bury their dead. You are an American now, and should do what you can for the country that took you in, when your own sent you forth to die. You are at war with the English now; but when the peace comes, you must forget that you ever were born in Ireland. America is your country now, and the more you look back at the past, the harder will be the future."

He paused a moment, as if to gain strength, and continued:

"I loved Ireland myself, God knows; but I have seen for years and years that her freedom must come only in the course of ages, as the

strength of England decreases. Devote yourself to the strength of America, and remember, everything helps that weakens England. If Ireland is ever to be free, it will only be when England is freer. Fight for liberty wherever you are, my boy, and the time will come. God bless old Ireland!"

He dropped his hand back on the pillow whence he had raised it, and appeared to be gasping for breath. Young Blake called to Father Tom, in an agitated way; but when the priest came forward, with the crucifix in his hand, the face of the old man had become of that bluish pallor that is the sure token of coming dissolution.

With a desperate effort he rallied so far as to hold out his hand to his grandson, who kissed it with fervor. Then he whispered:

"Remember. A new name; a new name."

The younger man caught the hand of the older one, and spoke to him, as if he would impress the meaning of his words on the dulled senses of the other.

"Grandfather," he said, "you are the last man who has the right to be called 'The Blake.' I shall never assume the title. But this I swear: I will avenge the murder of my father on every Manners that I meet, and Ireland shall be free yet."

The words seemed to have a comforting effect on the dying man, for he smiled faintly. Then his glance became vacant, and the last Blake of Castle Blake was gone to his long home.

Ere the breath was fairly out of his body, the sound of a horse's feet at full gallop was heard outside the gate, and Father Tom turned pale, as he looked at the young man.

CHAPTER V.

A BOLD RIDE.

THERE lay the dead man, on the couch, and Father Tom rose, as he heard the galloping hoofs, and went swiftly to the window. In the next moment he had come back to the young man, who stood as if paralyzed by the sudden death of his relative.

Father Tom put his hand on the arm of the other, and said, hastily:

"'Tis the officers are comin', boy. What'll ye do, now. We must hide ye. Come with me. They won't suspect ye. Put on the disguise."

Young Blake shook his head, as he answered: "The time for disguises is past, now, Father Tom. As long as he was alive, I could crouch, for the privilege of seeing my only living relative. Now, it is different. The Blake is dead, and the name with him. From henceforth, I am what they have made me."

As he spoke, he stripped off the brown surcoat which he had worn, and showed underneath it the uniform of an officer of some kind, that Father Tom had not seen yet.

With a rapid and nervous stride he went to the window and looked out, to see below the casement three men who were dismounting from their horses, and preparing to enter the house.

That they were officers of some kind was apparent from their dress; but they were not soldiers, and had no arms visible.

"Who are they?" he asked Father Tom, and the priest said:

"They're the crown officers, Master Jack, and they've come to put the seals on the property. They must have heard that the Blake was dying. What'll we do, sir? You are the Blake now."

The young man shook his head.

"The Blake is dead, and there is no more Blake now. I have changed my name. I am going to fight my way out of this nest of tyrants."

As he spoke he deliberately took from one of his pockets a pair of small pistols, and began to examine the priming.

Father Tom uttered an exclamation of horror.

"Ye won't try to fight them, sir? They'll have the hue and cry after ye, and ye'll be proclaimed for treason, as yer father was."

The young man laughed bitterly, as he retorted:

"Let them proclaim me. I come from a place where they care as much for a British proclamation as they do for an edict of the Emperor of China. I am going out, Father Tom."

He turned to the bed, on which lay the corpse of his grandfather, and softly kissed the forehead of the dead man, saying:

"Good-by, grandfather. You suffered much and your reward will be the greater. From henceforth, my course is clear."

Then he turned to the priest, and wrung his hand hard.

"Father Maginness," he said, "you have served the family faithfully; and we are not ungrateful. Whatever is in this house is yours, if the English wolves will allow you to take it. Farewell."

Then he strode from the room and went downstairs, where he found the three officers, who had entered in the mean time, and who saw him, in the dim light of the dark passage.

"Is the Blake dead yet, sir?" asked one of

them, as he saw the dark figure coming toward him.

"Yes, sir," responded the other, stiffly; and he brushed past the three men, when one of them called out to the others:

"Who's that man?"

Young Blake tarried no more to let them ask questions; but passed out into the open court before the house, where he found the "gossoon," who had come with him, still holding his horse, and staring at the animals that had been brought by the revenue officers. Without hurrying his pace, or exhibiting any concern, the young man strode to his horse, and had almost mounted, when one of the officers, who had followed him to the open air, called out:

"There is something wrong, O'Grady. Stop that man."

Without noticing the call, the young man put his foot in the stirrup-iron and swung himself into the saddle.

Then he turned round to the astonished officers, and revealed to them the full uniform of an American naval officer, calling out:

"Good-day, gentlemen. I am Captain Johnston Blakeley of the sloop-of-war Wasp, now lying in the bay. Good-by!"

With that he turned his horse and cantered away, as cool as if he was on a pleasure ride, and the amazed officers, after a mute pause of angry incredulity, rushed to their horses, and cried out:

"Catch him, dead or alive!"

Then they mounted and dashed after the fugitive, who took the road across the bogs of Connemara, with a directness of course that showed he thought he knew the country, no matter how unfounded his confidence might be.

He did not even hurry his pace, though the officers were coming up fast behind him, but he turned his animal into the bogs with a boldness that surprised even the gossoon that had come with him, while the officers, with a determination to catch the man who had so boldly announced himself as an enemy, in the heart of the country, followed him into the bogs with equal ardor.

From tussock to tussock of turf, the hack-horse sprung, as if he knew the way as well as the man who rode him, and the horses of the bailiffs, who followed him, were very soon in difficulties, from not following the track with sufficient closeness. Whenever they varied in the least from the hoof-marks of the horse in front, they came to grief, and lost time in getting out of the holes into which their rashness had led them. In this way they lost time and distance in the race, and, by the time they had traversed a mile or two, they were not so near as when they had started.

The leader seemed inclined to give up the chase as hopeless; but the second man kept shouting:

"Keep it to him, boys, we'll catch him at the Run, we'll catch him at the Run."

The Run, otherwise the Black Run, was a little stream, which had been formed, in some former time, by a deep drain, and which had widened into a perennial stream, that had a bridge over it, by the only road, in that part of the country, which led to Galway Bay.

At last, after a long chase through the bog, in which the officers had more than once come within an ace of being mired for good, the stone bridge was descried in front, and the silver line of the Run, as it glittered in the evening sun, was visible.

The fugitive horseman paused at the line of the bridge, and waited for his pursuers to come up, which they did very soon.

He was on the bridge, and they were below him. Beyond him stretched the high-road, once on which, it would be a question of speed, and he saw that the officers were better mounted than himself. They had blooded horses, and his own was but a hack. Hitherto he had had the advantage of being in a place where he knew the ground, when they did not, and now that advantage was to be lost.

The young man turned to the faithful gossoon who had come with him, all the way from Galway, and was now breathing hard, as if he had been doing his best.

"How much does the master want for this horse, Patsey?" he asked.

Patsey scratched his head, as he answered:

"Sorra one o' me knows, sir. I'm thinkin' he won't be askin' much, after to-day gets over. The b'aste's goin' to get shot, I'm thinkin'."

The fugitive saw that the conjecture was about to be verified, for, as the men in pursuit came up to the foot of the bridge, he could see they were handling the pistols which they had under their coats, but which they had not been able to get near enough to use, so far.

"Well, Patsey," he said, good-humoredly, as he put his hand into his pocket, "I shall give you twenty pounds for him, in case you never see him again. Here, take the money."

He threw the boy a little bundle of notes, and added:

"The horse is mine. Now get out of the way, for there's going to be a shindy here."

Patsey saw that he was in earnest; for the stranger drew from his pocket a pair of small pistols, and began to make his preparations to

defend the bridge, with as much coolness as if he was doing the most commonplace thing in the world.

The gossoon got out of the way, with all the promptitude of a Texas barkeeper, in modern times, when two gentlemen have a disagreement at cards, and begin to pull out their weapons. He ducked under the stone coping of the bridge, and hid himself, in such a position that he could see the whole fight, without being within range of the missiles that he anticipated were about to fly.

Meantime, the three officers, who had got stuck fast in the last piece of bog, got out and began to climb the bank, to gain the bridge.

As they came on, the stranger hailed them.

"Gentlemen," he cried out, "I warn you to go back. There is nothing to gain from me. If you want to have a fight, you will get all you want. Keep back, and let me go my way, and I will let you go yours."

The only reply of the revenue officers, who thought that they had got a valuable prisoner before them, was to come out of the bog and begin to climb the bank together.

Then the stranger on the bridge raised his pistol and sighted it, with a cool precision that was very different from the way in which pistols were generally used in those days. There was a flash and a report. Down went the horse of the foremost officer, shot through the brain; and, before the echo of the shot had fully died away, came another, and down went the second animal.

Then the stranger laughed, and rode off at a canter, coolly reloading his pistols as he went, while the only mounted officer who was left, was so much astonished and demoralized, at the sudden and unlooked for disaster, that had overtaken his comrades, that he forgot to fire his own pistol at the horse of the fugitive, till it was too late for an effective aim, and the figure of the stranger was seen down the road, gayly cantering away out of danger.

Then his comrades called out to him savagely "not to let himself be beaten like that," and he set off at a gallop, to overtake the fugitive.

In those days of flint-locks and priming, the task of reloading a pistol from a galloping horse was one that very few men could perform. The pursuing officer, being the best mounted, came up with the fugitive in the first mile, and shouted to him to "surrender," covering him with a pistol, the while. The only answer of the fugitive was to wheel round in his saddle, and wave his hand, as much as to invite the other to come alongside.

The officer accepted the invitation, pistol in hand, not daring to throw away a shot, and came close up beside the other, when he was surprised to see that the fugitive had put his pistols away into his pocket, and was apparently unarmed.

The next minute, he was going to put his hand on the collar of the stranger when the latter suddenly turned round in his saddle as he rode, and gave his horse a twitch of the bridle which made the animal swerve aside. The officer fired, and missed, in his confusion; then, with a sudden turn that showed the fugitive was an accomplished horseman, the revenue officer found himself confronted by a man of such enormous strength, that he was thrown out of his saddle and on the ground by a single blow, and the stranger rode off in triumph, leading his pursuer's horse with him.

CHAPTER VI.

HANDSOME JACK.

LORD JOHN MANNERS was a man of commanding personal presence, called "Handsome Jack" in the navy, from the graces which he possessed. He was the son of the Duke of Rutland and heir apparent to the dukedom. Very few men of his expectations would have condescended to work, except in Parliament, but there was something in the Manners family, that kept them at labor, when other of the noble families were content to live on their glories at home.

This something was the fact that the Duke of Rutland was the poorest duke in England, as the county from which he took his title was the smallest of the counties.

There was always a Manners in the army or navy, and they were well known for daring. The most distinguished of the family, before the date of our story, was the Marquis of Granby, whose title was only one of courtesy, and who would have been a duke, had he lived long enough.

His nephew, Lord John Manners, was a captain in the navy, not too proud to take a small vessel if he could not get a large one, at a time when the British navy was the first in the world, and when its service was sought by every person who had any interest to advance him.

Lord John Manners was stepping into his gig in the harbor of Plymouth, conversing earnestly with a man of a weazened and sneaking appearance, who was telling him something that evidently surprised the captain very much.

"Come with me, then, Fisher," he said, as he stepped on board the gig, that lay by the steps. "I can send you ashore by the bum-boat, if

you want to go; but I can't lose a moment's time, if what you say is true."

"Your lordship can rely on it that it is true," said Fisher, with an expression of profound conviction. "The officer don't often make mistakes, and the intelligence was positive."

He followed the young nobleman aboard the boat as he spoke, and sat down by him in the stern sheets, while he continued in a low tone, that the sailors might not hear and understand:

"The semaphore message was as plain as ever I saw anything. It read that the rebel Blake, who had been attainted for so many years, had made his appearance on the coast of Ireland, and had been seen at the house of his grandfather. It seems that the officers of the chancellor had gone there, to put the seals on everything, the old man being dead; and they found the young man there, trying to save what he could, it is supposed, from the wreck. Well, he got off and escaped; but the strangest thing is that the fellow turned out to be the captain of a Yankee ship, that has been hanging round the channel for some time as they think."

Lord John laughed with some scorn, as he said:

"I thought they had enough of that, since we took the Argus. It is but a poor return the Yankees are getting for their pains, when they come to this coast. Paul Jones is one thing; but there are not many Paul Joneses in the world. What sort of a ship is this Yankee, that is so bold?"

Fisher put his mouth close to the captain's ear, as he said:

"It's not the ship, my lord; but don't you know what is the matter between the captain and your—his grace, I mean?"

The young captain turned and looked at his companion with some surprise, saying:

"No; what do you mean?"

Fisher seemed to be a little embarrassed, as he said:

"If your lordship will excuse me, I would rather not speak before the men. It is a family secret."

Whatever the reason of the change, the young nobleman flushed slightly, and answered hurriedly:

"All right; wait till we get aboard."

He was silent all the rest of the passage to the brig he commanded, and it was not till he had got into his cabin, that he asked Fisher sharply:

"Now then, what is it? You know and I don't. It is a strange thing that I am always finding something that is troublesome or disgraceful in the past; and I am never allowed to know it till it is too late to do anything. Now, what is it? You were the legal adviser of the duke, in the days before he was the duke, and you know all about it I suppose. What was the trouble that you speak about, between my father and this Yankee?"

Mr. Fisher, who had known the young captain since he was a boy, and had taken a great interest in the family, was now engaged in what is called the "secret service," and no one knew how he lived, outside of the Government's agents.

He looked round him, in the apprehensive way which had become a second nature, since he had been in the secret service, and said to Manners in a low tone:

"Are you sure that no one can hear us, my lord?"

The captain went to his own state-room, and threw open the doors; then came back and said briefly:

"No matter who may be near; let me know what you mean."

Then Fisher began, in a timid way, to say:

"I hope that your lordship won't be offended at what you are about to hear; but it is only the facts, as they stand, that I am about to tell you."

"Go on, sir," was the proud reply. "As long as you tell nothing else, you may depend on it that I shall say nothing."

Thus encouraged, the lawyer went on:

"Your lordship must reflect that this is all only hearsay, and that there may be some facts on the other side, that may alter the case somewhat. The fact is, your father was, at one time, in the last century—that is not so very long ago now, my lord—as ardent in the cause of Wilkes and liberty, as any commoner of them all. He was then only, like yourself, plain Lord John, and the late Marquis of Granby was still alive. But he was a friend of the men who opposed the union in Ireland, and his greatest friend was a young squire, that they called the Young Blake, in a way those Irish have. His father was the Old Blake, and the young man was one of the chief men in the rebellion of 'Ninety-eight."

"Well, well, what of it all?" interrupted Lord John, testily. "Bring out what you are going to, and don't beat about the bush so long. You want to say that the present duke, being a spendthrift, and wanting money, sold his friend. I have heard the story before, but never believed it."

Fisher came a little closer, and lowered his voice, to say:

"I am not the accuser of any one, my lord,

but it is certain that your—the present duke—was heavily in debt at that time, and that he was an intimate friend of The Blake. It is certain that he suddenly paid off his debts, and left Ireland, where he had been stopping at the house of The Blake. It is also certain that the testimony of one of the witnesses in the trial, that afterward took place, in which The Blake was finally condemned to be hung for treason, was given under the seal of secrecy, and that The Blake was betrayed to his enemies by one of his friends. Whether that friend was the present duke or not, is uncertain, but this I know, that the people in that part of the country believed it at the time, and that the odium that attached to your—the present duke—did not subside till he succeeded to the dukedom."

Lord John nodded gloomily. He was one of those unfortunate men who, having been cursed with a bad father, are forever uneasy under the feeling that they have to defend him.

He had listened to the disclosure of the lawyer, and now he said:

"Well, I had heard all that before, and I don't believe a word of it. If you ever hear it again from any one deny it from me, and I will back you up in all you do."

Fisher shrugged his shoulders, and answered: "As you please, my lord, but let me warn you of one thing, that the son of the man who was hung is yet alive, and that he is the commander of this very Yankee ship that they are trying to catch."

Lord John started slightly, and his face flushed, as he said:

"Glad of it; glad of it. I will drive the lie down his Yankee throat. The half-breed Irish traitor!"

Then he strode to the door, and said to the sentry:

"Pass the word for the officer of the deck."

That gentleman came in very soon after, and the commander gave the curt order:

"All hands up anchor and make sail at once, sir. We must be at sea before the sun is an hour lower."

The surprised officer touched his cap, for the order was entirely unexpected, and more than half the crew was on shore at liberty. The brig Reindeer had arrived at Plymouth some days before, after a cruise in the channel; and her people had made up their minds they were to have a rest for some time.

Mr. Jones, the officer of the deck, was at his wit's end what to do to obey the captain's order in time; but he managed to send for the first lieutenant, who was on shore, and by bustling about, and driving the midshipmen half-crazy, looking round for the men, who were brought in from the town in all stages of drunkenness, the anchor was hove short in an hour and a half from the time when the captain told the officer of the deck, and that functionary came to the door of the cabin, and touched his hat as he reported:

"Hove short, sir."

Lord John looked up at him as if he had forgotten all about it, and answered absently:

"What is that you say?"

Mr. Jones stared at his commander, as he replied:

"Hove short, sir. You ordered the brig under way, as soon as possible: didn't you, sir?"

Lord John nodded, in the same absent way; and replied:

"Very good, sir. Put the brig on her course to the Land's End. Call me, when you see it."

The officer of the deck noticed that the man who had accompanied the captain into the cabin from the shore had gone, and he wondered what was the matter with the skipper. He did not know that Lord John had been having a fierce struggle with himself, to think that he was right in going out to attack the man whose father had been ruined by the father of Lord John himself.

He had come to the conclusion that, if he did not, the man, who was now in the American service, would be able to make damaging statements with regard to the duke, and that it was his duty, for the credit of the family, to stop the mouth of this officious Yankee, by taking his ship, and, if possible, killing him, so that he could say nothing derogatory to the duke.

That point settled in his own mind, he had spent some time in questioning the lawyer and government spy, on the news that was accessible about the strength of the Yankee ship. The reports were that she was of the same force as the Argus, that had been taken so recently in the English channel by the brig Pelican, and Manners had a well founded confidence in his own powers to take any ship of the class of his own. He had started out, for the express purpose of catching the Wasp, as the strange ship was said to be called, and the news of the lawyer, that the captain of the Yankee was a strong personal enemy of his father, was only an additional incentive to the eagerness with which he set out on his search.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAPTAIN'S CABIN.

THE British brig, Reindeer, was of the largest size then usual for brigs-of-war, and mounted

eighteen carronades, originally thirty-two pounders, but changed for twenty-fours at the dockyard, owing to the fancied inability of the brig to hold such heavy ordnance without being racked to pieces.

She carried, on her fore-castle, a shifting-gun, that was used, sometimes on boat service, and more often as a chase gun.

Her model was a swift one, and she had a good crew, of the kind that could be procured, at that time, in any seaport town of the English coast, when commerce was almost as dangerous as the naval service.

That evening, as she stretched out of the harbor of Plymouth, and took her way into the English channel, she had the look of a gallant young knight, going to his first battle, and her sails swelled out with a pride that made one think that the brig was conscious of her own beauty.

By the time the sun set, she was well out to sea, with the tall tower of Eddystone Light-house well astern, and the rocks of Lizard Point to the north, while the more distant outline of the Land's End, behind the Lizard, could be seen, like a faint cloud on the horizon.

The Reindeer was in the "Chops of the Channel," ready to intercept anything that was coming up that body of water, with hostile intent.

As the sun set, the moon rose, and the warm summer air of the southwest wind, that came in from the Atlantic Ocean, was so soft and pleasant, that most of the sailors, though it was not their watch on deck, had come up, and were lounging about the fore-castle, some asleep, others more than half so, while the brig kept on her course to the southwest, with a good lookout at the mast-head, as long as the moon lasted, and two steady hands at the heel of the bow-spirit, to scan the horizon all round.

At six o'clock the captain dined in state in the cabin, and, by special invitation, the first lieutenant, Mr. Bunt, shared the meal and the confidences of his superior.

Mr. Bunt was a sailor of the old school, who had risen from the fore-castle, in the days when there was some chance of such a thing, and he was keenly conscious of the fact that his commander was the son of a duke and his superior at home, while Lord John had no less respect for his first lieutenant's abilities as a sailor.

Therefore Mr. Bunt was always very respectful to the captain, and paid more attention to his wishes than is the wont of most first lieutenants, in his position of dry nurse, who, as a rule, were, at that time, very opinionated and obstinate.

The lamps were lit on the table of the captain's cabin, and the glitter of silver, with the sparkle of cut-glass, showed that Lord John was a rich and luxurious man;—for, though his father was the poorest duke in England, what is poverty, to a duke, may be affluence, to any ordinary mortal.

Mr. Bunt was an elderly man, who had a habit of dropping his H's, of which he was not always conscious; but which he was, at the same time, striving to avoid. He had come from a rank in life in England, where the dropping of that useful letter is universal, and not to be hidden, yet he was forever trying to hide the fact.

The captain was very gracious that evening, and plied Bunt with the excellent wine which made an invitation from Lord John a welcome thing to any of the brig's officers; though they all stood in awe of the rank of their commander, as is the wont of Englishmen.

"Well, Bunt, and what do you think we have come to sea for?" asked Lord John, when the wine had been passed several times.

Bunt's tongue had been loosened and emboldened by the wine, and he answered, without thinking of his aspirates:

"To 'unt for prizes, my lord, I should say. It'll be a 'ard lookout, I should say, too. The mounseers ain't going to give us much chance, and there ain't any one else that can."

"I don't expect to see a Frenchman, all the cruise, Bunt. They are on their last legs. I'm after bolder game. I have private intelligence that there is a Yankee ship in the channel, that is coming to repeat the ravages of that brig the Pelican took, last year."

Mr. Bunt looked wisely at the decanter.

"If it's a Yankee, my lord, we'll 'ave a 'ard fight. I was in the Java, two years ago, when the Yankees took her. They fight like good fellers."

Lord John frowned impatiently. He was one of the Englishmen that hate to acknowledge that their nation has ever been beaten by any other.

"I know that, and all the rest of it; but that was because the ships were disproportioned in size and everything else. Bunt; the Java was a thirty-eight, and the Constitution was a forty-four. Look at their brave Lawrence, that they made such a brag of, when he took the Peacock with the Hornet. He had all the odds on his side. Broke was the man that took the starch out of him, when he met him on something of an equality. He took your brave Yankee in ten minutes with the Shannon. Both ships equal, and see the result."

And the captain tossed off a bumper of wine, with an air that said:

"Answer that, if you can, my boy."

Bunt made no answer till he had followed the captain's example, when he remarked:

"Of course, my lord, I ain't saying but what his majesty's vessels are far superior to these Yankees, man to man, but that ain't the question now. They generally manage to get the hupper 'and of us, by 'aving the biggest ships, when they meet us, and that's fair enough."

Lord John nodded as he replied:

"Of course that is all fair; but I don't like to hear any man quote that old Constitution to me all the time. This ship, that we are after, is another thing altogether. She is a sloop-of-war."

"Ow big?" asked Bunt, gravely, with the look of an owl in daylight; for he was rapidly getting drunk.

"That is the very thing that I wanted you to tell me, if you can. You were a prisoner in the Yankees' hands for some time, and must have heard or seen something of their ships. Did you ever hear of one called the Wasp?"

Bunt nodded.

"I should think I 'ad, my lord. Why, that was the brig that took the Frolic in twenty minutes, and then got taken by the Poitiers. Why, that was the talk of the 'ole squadron, at the time it 'appened. The Frolic was shot all to pieces, and the Wasp 'ad two guns less than she 'ad."

Lord John uttered an incredulous oath.

"Two guns less! You mean two guns more, sir."

"I don't mean anything of the kind, begging your lordship's very 'umble pardon," said Bunt, with a pragmatical obstinacy that showed the effect of the wine. "I mean that the *Frolic* 'ad two guns the most, and she was knocked into a cocked 'at. If it 'adn't been for the Poitiers coming in, she'd 'a' taken the *Frolic* into the Yankee port; but the Poitiers was a seventy-four, and even a Yankee won't fight a seventy-four with a gun-brig."

"Then there is no such ship now, in the Yankee navy, you mean to say?" asked the captain eagerly.

Bunt shook his head.

"I don't mean anything of the kind, your lordship. I mean that the *old Wasp* was taken in, and done for. But I remember that, just before I was exchanged, there was a talk about building a new *Wasp*, and a new *Ornet*, to look like the old ones; but they was to be bigger and 'ave 'evier guns. They was to be the same number, I believe; but they was to be thirty-twos, Carronades, of course."

Lord John listened, and said, in a thoughtful way:

"And we have only twenty-fours. How many guns were these new ships to carry?"

"Eighteen, my lord, and a pair of chasers on the forecastle."

"And what were they to be?"

"If they were like the old *Ornet* and *Wasp*, they was to be twelves, my lord; but, as to that, I couldn't say positive."

"Look here, Bunt," said the young nobleman, earnestly. "Suppose we should meet this Yankee, do you think we ought to fight him?"

Mr. Bunt lifted his eyebrows at the question, and answered at once:

"Why, of course, your lordship. Nobody can tell what odds a British sailor may 'ave to face; but 'e 'as to face them, if 'e comes across them, fair. Still, I must say that, I shouldn't 'anker after meeting the Yankee *Wasp*, if it's the same that I 'eard about when I was in New York. She was going to be, what they called, out there, a screamer."

Lord John drew nearer to his first officer, and his voice had a ring of sincerity that impressed Bunt deeply.

"I've got to fight him, if I meet him; and I've got to meet him in some way, Bunt. Do you know that the Yankee hes an Irishman for a captain?"

"No, my lord," was the rather puzzled answer; for Bunt saw that some confidence was coming. "Ow do you know?"

"His name is Blake, and he is the son of the man that was executed for treason in 'Ninety-eight, Bunt. The fellow is going about, telling every one that he has a grudge against the duke, my father, and I must put a stop to his impudence, for the sake of my family."

Bunt nodded, with a great deal of respect, as he said, thickly:

"Serve scoundrel right, m' lord. Th' Yank' scamp! T' go tak' 'way char'ct'r' 'I nob' dook! Pooh! Can't do it; can't do it!"

And Mr. Bunt made a motion of great contempt at the imaginary Yankee, as he spoke.

Lord John leaned forward to ask him:

"You have seen how these Yankees fight? Tell me, what is their best point?"

Bunt was quite sober enough to give a reasonable account of the action in which he had first seen the powers of the American ships, so he unhesitatingly answered:

"Long bows, my lord, long bows, and nothing else, like it. We were picked to pieces, spar after spar, till the old *Java* was a reg'lar

wreck, and the confounded Yankee had not a scratch, as it seemed."

"Did you try boarding?" asked the young nobleman eagerly.

Bunt shook his head.

"Wish we 'ad, my lord. We 'ad a lot of men on board, and we could 'av wiped 'em out, if we could 'av fought 'em close; but that was just what they wouldn't stand, nohow. They kept us at long bowls, till we were all cut to pieces, and then they come alongside, and we lying like a log on the water. If we could 'ave done it in the fust place, we might 'ave 'ad a chance; but, as it was the captain thought that 'e 'ad the best of it, any'ow, till it was too late."

Lord John compressed his lips.

"That settles it, Bunt. When I meet this fellow, I am going to bring him to close action at once, and go on board him as soon as the two get near enough. We'll see whether British sailors are the men of Trafalgar, or not. Remember that, whatever happens in this voyage, it is my last order that, if I get killed on the deck, the brig is to be run on board the enemy, and that the boarders are to be relied on, at all hazards. We can carry anything that has not twice as many men as we have."

Bunt rose as his commander spoke, for there was that in the demeanor of Lord John, which showed that he wished his subordinate to retire. As he took his leave, he said:

"Your orders shall be obeyed, my lord, and we shall see whether they won't end in another Argus and Pelican affair."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SMUGGLER'S YACHT.

A HANDSOME little yacht, with a rig that showed that she was English, was standing off and on before the entrance of the Irish Channel between St. David's Head and the Inskar Rock, as if she were waiting for some one or something, when her lookout, at the top of the single mast, called down to the owner of the yacht, who was pacing the deck below:

"There's a sail in sight, to the southwest, sir, that looks like the ship we were to wait for."

The owner of the yacht looked up, and showed the face of a man of middle age, with the mutton-chop whiskers, and fat, self-satisfied expression of the true Briton, as he answered:

"Very good, John. What kind of sails has she?"

"Biggest I ever seen, sir," was the reply. "Looks as if she might be a frigate, from the spread of canvas; but the hull ain't no more than might be in a brig-of-war."

"It must be the same," said the gentleman below, in a thoughtful way, and half to himself. "I wish she was safely out of the place, now she has come in. It is too rash for any man to think of doing this kind of thing, all the while."

The old gentleman below was the head of the smuggling firm of Bampton and Portier, which had the repute of having made more money, during the Napoleonic wars, than any two men in legitimate trade in the whole United Kingdom. Mr. Bampton was a man who had begun the world with a single desire of making money at any hazard, as long as it was made; and he was born in a good time; for, during the war which lasted, in Europe, from the year 1790, with very little intermission, till 1814, the opportunities for money making, by a man or men who were willing to risk the capture of their goods by the cruisers of both sides, were many and great.

What with Napoleon ordering embargo on all English products, and England declaring the coasts of every nation, in alliance with the great Corsican, to be under a strict blockade, there was no place in the whole of Europe where the trade that was carried on had not the charm and excitement of blockade-running.

Bampton was an Irishman, and Portier was a Frenchman. Both had been fishermen, and had lost all they had in the early part of the war, when both sides had cruisers and seized everything they could lay their hands on.

The two men had made each other's acquaintance in Dartmoor and Cherbourg prisons respectively. Bampton had been in the one and had received kindness from Portier, who at that time was a common sailor, pressed into the service. He had aided Bampton to escape, and Bampton had returned the compliment when fortune had thrown his friend into his hands. Then it was, about the time of the battle of the Nile, that they had entered into the partnership that was afterward to prove so profitable. Being both sailors and bold men, they had begun their career in open boats, and had carried over from France to England several cargoes of silks that had enriched them by the enormous profits, to that extent that they had changed from the small boat to a lugger at the third voyage, and had been equally fortunate in running a third cargo. From the date of their acquisition of the lugger they had prospered, and the standing wonder with all the friends of Bampton was, how he escaped from the officers of the customs that were on the watch on the coast, as the frigates and brigs were on the open sea.

His secret he never told to any one, but it was remarked that, when other smugglers and blockade-runners were tripped up and convict-

ed, there were always plenty of lawyers to defend them; while, at the only trial in which the house of Bampton and Portier figured, no defense was made, and the partners gave up the whole cargo with an equanimity that saved them from further prosecution for a good many years.

If the secret of the house had been revealed it would have been found to consist of wholesale bribery of the officers of customs; so that it was the interest of these gentry to shut their eyes to every vessel that came by a certain track, and made it better worth their while to let them pass, for a series of years, than to make a capture that would have killed the goose that laid so many golden eggs.

Mr. Bampton's yacht was therefore a well-known figure in the chops of the channel and in the neighboring Irish Channel, and it was the fashion for the revenue cutters not to notice it when they saw it, unless there happened to be a frigate or man-of-war of some kind in sight at the time.

Yet such 'was the ship that was now approaching the yacht, which had called from Bampton the muttered wish that she "might get out as safely as she got in."

The water at the time was studded with sails, and the shores of the two kingdoms were plainly in sight from the mast-head of the yacht, though from the deck only a faint cloud showed the Irish coast, and that of Wales was invisible.

The brown sails of fishing-boats, and the whiter canvas of the other craft—particularly brigs—that were scattered about gave an air of business to the sea, that was not then possessed by the more dangerous English Channel, where both sides were owned by hostile nations.

The ship that was approaching the yacht was covered with sail from deck to truck.

That she was a man-of-war was probable from the peculiar neatness of everything visible about her, and from the long pennant that streamed from her mast-head. As she advanced she threw a cloud of spray from before her bows, and cleft the little waves with a smoothness that showed she was a swift ship.

The yacht, which bore the name "Spray," on her stern, laid her head toward the stranger as soon as she became visible, and in half an hour more was alongside.

Then it might be seen that the ship was of large size, though not a frigate, and that she carried a number of guns on her decks, though the ports were kept closed. Over her side looked the face of a young and handsome man, who wore the uniform of Great Britain, and he hailed the yacht:

"Yacht ahoy! Is Mr. Bampton there?"

"That is myself," was the answer, as Bampton looked up and bowed. "Will you come aboard, or will you prefer that I come to you, sir?"

He spoke with an air of respect, as if the commander of the ship was his superior; one at great variance with his habitual air, which was decidedly purse-proud.

The young man looked down with a polite smile and answered:

"I will board you, if you please. You are the oldest, and I am the younger of the two."

Then he turned away, and the shrill pipe of a boatswain's whistle echoed through the ship, followed by the dropping of a boat from the stern davits, in which the captain of the strange ship came to the yacht.

It was a captain's uniform he wore, with a grace and dignity that showed he was a sailor to the backbone.

As soon as he had gained the deck of the *Spray* he sent his boat away, with the order to return to the ship and await orders from the yacht. Then he turned to Bampton and said:

"Now to your cabin, if you please. I have a good deal to ask and to answer."

Bampton bowed and took his guest to the little cabin of the yacht, which was furnished with a richness that told of the position of the owner. Nevertheless, the attitude and manner of Bampton toward the young officer who entered his cabin were those of great respect, and it was with a very low bow that he said:

"I hope I see The Blake well to-day."

The young stranger turned to him and answered:

"You mean well, Mr. Bampton, and you have proved a very good friend to me in the time of need; but I must tell you one thing. There is no longer any one called The Blake, and my name from henceforth is Captain Blakeley of the American navy. I have done with the past of my family in this country, and never wish to be reminded of it again."

The old smuggler colored slightly as he said:

"No offense, I'm sure, sir. I had no idea that you would take it ill. The title is one that is yours by right, and I thought you might like to know that it is recognized by your own countrymen."

Blakeley shook his head.

"My countrymen recognize no titles, and I have thrown away all memory of the country that was my father's. I am Blakeley, and not The Blake. Now for your news. What are the prospects of selling prizes, if we take any?"

Bampton rubbed his hands.

"Very good indeed, captain, very good indeed. If you take them you have only to go into L'Orient to sell all you have. It is perfectly safe there."

"But is there not a chance to do the same in any other port? The French have no money now, and the chances are that we should have to sacrifice the ships for a mere song."

Bampton screwed up his face.

"I know that; but what would you have? You can't sell them in Spain. The Dons have got less money than the Mounseers, and there is no place so near and convenient as L'Orient."

Blakeley waved his hand, as one weary of the subject, and went on:

"As you please. Your firm will take them at a price—"

"Which you can agree on, with my partner, Mr. Portier. You can depend on one thing, that he will give you a better price than any one else can afford."

"And why, Mr. Bampton?"

Bampton's face turned rather red, as if he was ashamed of showing so much feeling, as he replied:

"Perhaps you may consider it a weakness, but I have a grudge to pay against the British Government; and I can afford it better than a good many others. I was out in 'Ninety-eight, too, Mr. Blakeley. I know some of the leading actors in that time, and I know how your father was betrayed by his friend."

The young captain turned a shade paler, but his only answer was:

"I have told you that I have done with the past till I meet the man who betrayed him. Then I will have my revenge."

Bampton shook his head.

"You never will. He is a duke now, and there is no way in which you and he can ever meet."

"Why not?" asked Blakeley steadily. "Suppose a man could be found who was willing to take his life into his hand, and go to that man's house, in broad daylight, to kill him. It might be done."

"It might," was the dry answer, "if the man was willing to be hung for murder."

Blakeley laughed as he replied:

"Hanging does not terrify me, when I remember *who* was hung before me. But you need not be afraid I shall do anything rash. I have a mission to this country, and it has got to be executed. I have to destroy the commerce of England, as she has destroyed our own. The first thing to do in that case is to take the war-ships that are on guard here. The mistake that the Argus made was to burn merchants and traders, and leave the war-ships alone. The consequence was, when she met a war-vessel, she was unprepared, and her men did not fight as they ought to have done. I shall keep my men at the proper work of a sloop-of-war. Fighting is my business here, and I am going to confine myself to it."

Bampton seemed to be uneasy at his words, for he asked:

"And suppose you meet merchant ships, are you going to let them pass?"

"Of course not; but I am not going to stain my name by destroying everything that wears the flag of England, because it is defenseless. If I come across a convoy, under a frigate, I shall do all I can to cut out something from under the guns of the enemy. That is my purpose."

"A pretty bold one, captain," said Bampton, doubtfully, "and what do you want from me?"

"All the news you can give me. The names and strength of the small ships and brigs that are cruising in the Channel and around the coasts. The probable number of ships that are coming from India, and the route by which they are coming. All you know that would help me, in short."

Bampton nodded, and pulled out some papers from a drawer in the side of the cabin.

"There is what you want," he said. "Now, what else?"

Blakeley looked over the papers before he made any answer, and then he replied:

"That is all I wanted. I see from this that the East India fleet is expected through the Bay of Biscay by the end of August. What is the convoy likely to be? That is not down."

Bampton shook his head as he said:

"It's no use your thinking of that, captain. The convoy is sure to be made of line-of-battle-ships and frigates, and you would have no more chance of taking one of the Indiamen, from under their guns, than you would have of flying. That will have to be left to the enemy."

Blakeley cast a singular look across the table at the other.

"You are not much of a warrior, after all, Mr. Bampton. It is the unexpected that is always the safest in war. They will never think I would dare to attack a convoy; and that is the very reason that they will be careless. Never mind what I shall do; I am much obliged to you for your information. The funds are—"

"All right," said the other promptly. "The orders are cashed, and there is no difficulty. If you want any money, you can have it."

Blakeley shook his head.

"I want no money now. Before long, we shall all have plenty, when I have taken it from the English. One thing I have to ask: Can you put me ashore in England, and take me to London, with any sort of safety? I want to go there, for a purpose."

Bampton stared at him, as he thought he was mad.

"To London!" he echoed. "Why, man, they would have you, as sure as fate, and hang you for a spy."

"I am willing to take my chances of that," was the quiet answer.

"I have a reason for wanting to go to London, and what I want you to do is to take me there, in your yacht or otherwise, as a servant, or in any disguise that you think best."

Bampton shrugged his shoulders as he answered:

"If you really want to go, there is a way in which you can. But I must know what you want to go for. I take a risk, if you go with me."

Blakeley leaned his head over to the other to say:

"There is a lady in the case, and it must be done."

Bampton immediately answered:

"It shall be done then."

CHAPTER IX.

THE SMUGGLER'S WARD.

LONDON to-day is too well known to Americans to demand any description; but London in 1814 was a very different place to what it has become since.

At that time, it was a city of less than half the people that it now possesses, and the "city," so called—the old Roman town, of 237 acres—was the center of importance, instead of being, as now, a mere adjunct to its own suburbs.

In the heart of the city, the house of Bampton and Portier—not under that name, but having only that of the English partner on the modest brass plate which marked the door—was situated at the end of a little court, where a few flowers grew on the south side, and where very little trade appeared to pass. There was not even a warehouse; for Bampton preferred to use the stores of others to hold his goods, when they were brought to London at all, which was not often.

The house had been a private residence in the old times, and the proprietor still did his business and lived in the same place.

From the back windows, which looked out on the river, one could see the docks of the powerful East India Company, and watch the lighters, as they plied their trade in the river. The court in front of the house was rarely visited in the daytime, and the visitors who came in the evening were of a furtive kind, who held secret conferences with the owner and went away from some back door; for they were never seen to emerge from the court.

The house itself was a silent and gloomy one; yet there were those who said they had heard singing in it, at various times. Others had seen a young girl, who would come out into the court to tend the flowers.

However that might be, a few days after the meeting of the yacht *Spray* and the *Wasp* in the Irish Channel, the owner of the place, Mr. Bampton, came in on foot and brought with him a young man, who wore the usual dress of a person of fashion, in those days, and had a very handsome face.

Bampton brought him into the house without any ceremony; but as soon as he was inside he said to him, with an air of profound respect:

"Now, sir, you are my guest, and your life is in my hands. I am responsible for it. I implore you not to venture outside of this house till I tell you that it is safe. I have brought you here as the safest place, for no one would suspect you would dare to appear in the midst of your enemies; but there are spies round this house all the time, and if they notice anything that looks like the presence of a stranger, they will report it to the office at head-quarters and you will be arrested surely."

"For what?" asked Blakeley, coolly, for it was he.

Bampton hesitated.

"They would suspect you of being a Frenchman in disguise, for it is known how I make my money. But if they once caught you they would not let you go, for you could not account for yourself. The fact is, captain, I have a good deal of trouble with these hungry officers, and if they thought I had a stranger in here they would surely think I could stand a heavy bribe. I have to buy my way through them, and it is only by pleading poverty that I manage to live at all. You must stay here, and I will make the inquiries that you desire."

Blakeley shrugged his shoulders.

"Thank you, but I prefer to do that myself. I have been in London before, and know my way very well. I have a reason why I don't want any one else to have anything to do with these inquiries."

He spoke decidedly, and the smuggler merchant, with the air of one who yields to an overpowering necessity, said:

"As you please, sir. It was your father that first set me up in my business, and I owe a debt of gratitude to the son. If you must prosecute your inquiries alone, do so; but at least promise me that you will not do anything without giving me an opportunity to make the adventure reasonably safe."

Blakeley smiled. There was something about this young man in the daring, not to say desperation, that marked all his conduct in war and in private, that showed him to be an unhappy man, who valued his life very little.

"You are too cautious," he said. "I thought that in you, as an Irishman whose business requires great boldness, I should find a man after my own heart. It seems that you are getting timid. What is the reason?"

The smuggler hesitated again, and finally answered:

"You shall see in a moment, sir; and I entreat you not to call down the officers of the law on this house by any indiscretion of your own. Please to follow me."

He led the way into a large room, that seemed to be used as a parlor, and was filled with all sorts of curiosities. There were carvings from France and Italy, together with quaint ivory and sandalwood ornaments from the East. More than one handsome picture on the walls showed that the merchant, with all his hard-headed and practical ways of doing business, had a great deal of good taste.

In a corner of the room was a "spinet," as the parent of the piano of the present day was called, and the rolls of music that lay by it showed that some one in the house was that way inclined.

Blakeley's eye seemed to be attracted by it at once, for he said:

"You have ladies in the house then?"

He spoke with an air of decided discomfort, that showed he did not like the idea. Bampton answered quietly:

"Yes; my ward. But you need have no fears of *her* discretion, sir. Rose is well able to take care of herself, and of any one who is in her charge. She has been used, from childhood, to refrain from showing her feelings."

Blakeley bowed stiffly; but it was evident that he did not like the idea of there being a woman in the house, for he said:

"Of course, if she is your ward, I shall try to make the best of it; but I must say, Mr. Bampton, that it seems to me foolish to have a woman or girl, in a house like this, which is liable to be visited by the officers of the law, at any moment. Have you no fear that, some day, she may be harmed by the dangers which a man is bound to encounter, but from which a woman ought to be sacred?"

"None whatever," said his host, with a faint smile. "Rose Lynch has been used to my life, since I first took her from—but you do not care to hear any stories of that sort."

"On the contrary," said Blakeley, who had become attentive as the smuggler uttered the name, "I should like to hear what you have to tell. Lynch is a familiar name to me from my boyhood. It is a Galway name, you know. How did this child come into your hands?"

Bampton answered:

"She is, as you think, Irish, and from Galway. She is one of the legacies that have come down to me from the rebellion, in which I got off much better than many others."

"And how did she come into your hands?"

"Her father was one of the men who was executed. He was a member of the society that started the whole trouble, and was taken at the last, fighting like a hero. I took the child, because he was my friend."

As he spoke these words, the door opened, and a girl put her head into the room as if she was about to enter; but, as soon as she saw that there was another person in the room besides Bampton, she instantly drew back, and only returned when the smuggler called out:

"Come in, Rose. I want you to see this gentleman."

Blakeley had risen from his chair, and was looking at the door.

He uttered a slight cry of intense amazement, and stood, like one spellbound, gazing at her, as if he had seen a ghost.

Yet the face and figure of the girl who entered were by no means likely to excite fear, or any other feeling but admiration.

Of medium height, and of that perfection of figure that shows the possession of good health and spirits, her face was that of an angel, as the young man said to himself, as soon as he saw it.

The hair was of that light golden color which is so beautiful in youth, and which is generally accompanied, as in this case, by pure white complexion and blue eyes. The whole effect of the figure, dressed in white, that glided into the room so softly, was that of an angelic visitant, and the surprise of finding such a creature, hidden away in the back of a smoky city house, by the prosaic river Thames, was enough to take away the breath of most men.

But, in Blakeley, the feeling was a different one, as could be seen as soon as he had recovered coolness enough, to answer the introduction which, the smuggler gave formally, when he

told the young lady that this was his guest "Mr. Brown, of Glasgow," and that he "would be with them for a little while before he went to sea."

The girl, whose name was announced as "Rose Lynch," accepted the introduction with a calmness that showed she was used to the world though she had lived a secluded life. In fact, the captain of the *Wasp* looked much the most embarrassed and bashful of the two.

He bowed, as he acknowledged the introduction; but he kept staring at the young lady, in a way that showed, either that he had forgotten his manners, or that there was something about her that interested him greatly.

The smuggler noticed his emotion, and seemed to be satisfied that it was caused by some association with the past, for he very soon said to his guest:

"Does she not remind you of some one, captain?"

He had forgotten that he had just introduced him as plain "Mr. Brown," and the girl noticed the change, for she gave a quick motion of her eyes toward her guardian, though she said nothing.

Blakeley hesitated for a moment, and finally said:

"There is a likeness; but I can hardly think it can be so. May I ask if you were ever in Galway, Miss Lynch? Your name is one that comes from there."

Rose hesitated and looked at Bampton, as if asking whether she should speak, and when the smuggler nodded, she answered:

"I don't know, sir. I think not. I must have been very young when I came away, if I was, for I have no recollection of the place. My uncle says that I was."

Blakeley turned to Bampton again, to ask:

"And you are sure that the real name of this young lady is Lynch? I know all the people of that name, and they are of the same features; but very different to these. If I had not your assurance, I should say that this young lady was—"

But what he meant to say was interrupted by a thundering knock at the door, which made old Bampton cry out to his guest in alarm:

"It is the police knock. Rose, hide the gentleman at once! No time to lose!"

And before Blakeley could tell what was the matter, the girl had taken him by the arm, with an air of authority that showed she had done the thing before, and urged him from the room, while Bampton, with every mark of trepidation on his face, went to the door of the house, to open to the intruder.

Blakeley was hesitating what to do, when the hand of his conductor on his arm was relaxed, and the girl said, hurriedly:

"We must come in here, sir."

They were in a part of the house where the light was dim, at the end of a long corridor, as she spoke, and he stared at the wall to which she pointed, expecting to see a door. There was nothing of the sort; but as she repeated "We must come in here," he asked:

"Where? I see no place to go."

The girl touched a place in the wall, where there was a little stain, and to Blakeley's surprise, the whole side of the wall fell in, and showed him the entrance of a room, lighted by two windows that looked out on the river, though everything in it was thick with dust, showing that it had been unoccupied for a long time.

"In! in!" she whispered to him, hurriedly. "There is no time to lose, and you must not be heard going in. I must get back to the parlor, or they will miss me."

Obedient to her wish he entered the room, and the next moment the wall closed in on him, and he found himself in a secret room, such as he had thought confined to medieval castles here in the heart of plain, prosaic London, in the nineteenth century.

It was evidently rarely used, for the dust, that lay so thick on all, was of that fine and soft kind that proves long accumulation. The windows were covered with it, and the young man, when he went to them to look out on the prospect, found the coating so thick, that he had difficulty in making out anything of the prospect.

What kind of a place he was in, and whether he was in any real danger, were thoughts that troubled the young captain very little; for he was of that desperate bravery, and the circumstances that had surrounded his youth had been so somber, that he had become careless whether he lived or died, so long as he had his revenge on the men who had hung his father. Treated, as the latter had been with all the ignominy that falls on a traitor in European monarchical countries, it was no wonder that his son had the bitterness that marked all the conflicts of that war of 1812, and he had come to London in the hope of wreaking personal vengeance against the man who had been denounced by his grandfather on his deathbed as the instrument of his father's death.

To make a dash and then escape, in the same adventurous way in which he had behaved in Ireland, was the idea of young Blakeley, which he concealed from Bampton, for he knew that

the smuggler, with his secretive habits, would never give his consent to anything so hazardous and uncertain. Now he was in London, he found his host had not overrated the dangers.

While he was thinking over all this, the sound of voices came to his ear, apparently out of the solid wall, and he recognized the tones of his host and another man.

CHAPTER X. THE SPY.

WHILE the mind of the refugee was busy in trying to find out what was the origin of the visit of the police, the master of the house was engaged with the gentlemen of that department in the parlor of the house in a manner that showed clearly that he was used to their visits.

This time it was a man who had been at the house before, from the way in which Bampton greeted him, with the observation:

"Well, Fisher, and what do you want with me to-day? I haven't been running anything in lately."

Fisher, the Government spy, who had had many dealings with the smuggler, smiled as he said:

"No, but there is a man who came in here a little while ago, and we should like to see him. Where is he?"

He spoke like an old friend, and the smuggler asked him in the same tone of half-banter which he had used:

"How much is it worth to see him, Fisher?"

Fisher looked at him as if he had not heard the remark.

"How much is it worth for us to go away from here, and ask no more questions?" he said.

Bampton put his hand in his pocket slowly.

"You are the most extortionate set," he growled. "If I served you right, I should go out of the business, and let you try to bleed some one else. I'll give the usual price and not a penny more. It's only a poor devil of a Frenchman, who wants to do a bit of business with us. You can't make any money out of him."

Fisher winked at him, and replied coolly:

"Bampton, that is a lie, and you know it as well as I do. That fellow is a Yankee, and we know it. Frenchmen don't talk English like he does. Come, he's worth twice the price of a Frenchman."

Bampton frowned as he heard the words, but saw that the other was in earnest, and that he would have to yield if he hoped to escape further suspicion, so he said:

"I don't admit that it is anything of the sort, but don't want to be bothered by your people, all the time, if I happen to take a friend into my house. I'll pay you for two, to get out of further annoyance, if you'll promise to go away. If you don't, I shall let you hunt for him, and for the money too. You know best whether that would be a money-making scheme for you; Which is it now, peace or war?"

Mr. Fisher was not aware, at the time that he spoke, that other eyes were on him, and that other ears were listening to his words. The house of Mr. Bampton had been altered, at the time he first took it, for the purposes it had since subserved, as the head quarters of the boldest smuggling business that had been carried on for many years, and the secret chamber that now held Blakeley, had been made for the very purpose of enabling the person concealed to hear what was being said in the parlor.

Blakeley heard every word that passed between the two men, and he heard Fisher say:

"You can't come that game over me, Bampton. I know you want to keep your friend safe and if we have to search the house, it will be the worse. If he's a Frenchman, it's all right; but if he is a Yankee, he can only be a spy, and that is different from all the smuggling trade in the world. I have found him out, and the men are round the house. Get him out, if you can."

Bampton said nothing for a moment; but then began in a tone of remonstrance:

"See here, Fisher, this is not fair. I have paid your people to let me alone; and, if you want to make a fight, I shall not go down alone. No one knows that, better than you. If I have to turn King's evidence, the men who have taken my money, all these years, will go down with me. You can't afford to fight me, now. Why not let things go on as they have done for so long? I will give you the price you ask."

Fisher laughed, as he replied:

"If you will do that, you will do more. I want three prices. I shall have to pay the men, and silence their suspicions, and that costs money."

"In God's name then take it," said Bampton angrily. "You fellows are bound to drive me out of the trade; and where will you be, when I am gone? I'll pay it, to have no further trouble."

"That is all right, then," said the spy, with the same impudent laugh that he had assumed throughout the interview. "Pay it, and I go out of the house."

Bampton, with a groan of extreme annoyance, was just getting out his pocket-book, when his ward came into the room, and said to

him, with an appearance of giving an ordinary message.

"Uncle, there are mice in the pantry. What shall we do about it?"

Fisher, in the suspicious way that he had acquired in his business, immediately turned on her to ask:

"And why don't you poison them, miss?"

He greeted her with an impudent leer that brought a flush of anger to her cheek, in an instant, while Bampton burst out:

"Look here, Fisher, I don't want you to give us any of your talk, here. Business is business; but the women of my house are not to be spoken to by you, or any of your fellows."

The smuggler knew that the words uttered by his ward were a signal, arranged between them, to show that danger was at hand, and he knew what it was. The signal "mice in the pantry" meant the man was in hiding. Therefore he put on an appearance of great indignation with Fisher, to cover up the return signal, which was embodied in the words that he addressed to Rose.

"Set the trap then, child. It will hold all that there are."

Rose retired with the answer:

"Very good, sir. I will do as you say."

Fisher, who had a suspicion that there was some signal hidden beneath the apparently-innocent words, kept his eyes on the girl as she retired, and both ears and eyes open for anything that might give him a clue of what was going on; but the smuggler was so cool, after his burst of apparent anger, that the spy's suspicions insensibly relaxed, and he allowed Bampton to pay over the money demanded, when he left the house. Bampton saw him go out of the court, and join a group of men who were hanging around the entrance of the place, with whom Fisher went away.

Then Bampton hurried off to the secret chamber, and found the door wide open, while Rose, in evident trepidation, was standing at the doorway, with a look of great anxiety on her face. The room was empty.

"Where is the stranger?" the smuggler asked at once.

Rose pointed out into the river.

"He went away, while you were bargaining with the man who came. He must have heard something, uncle. What did you say?"

"Nothing. I had to pay a handsome sum, to get him off from a search. But where has the rash young fool gone, Rose?"

"He asked me about the boat, and as soon as he heard that we had one, he would not be satisfied without he took it and tried to make his escape. He told me he would not bring us into trouble on his account, and went before I could prevent him. Oh, uncle, he will be caught, and it will be such a pity."

Bampton had become very pale as he said:

"It cannot be helped, Rose. I have done all I could to insure his safety. If he has gone away, he has taken his life into his own hands, and we are no longer responsible."

Then, as the girl was turning away with a sigh, he added:

"It is nothing to you, any way, child. He has not a penny of his own, and his estate is confiscated. If it were not that I had received kindness from his father, I should not feel any interest in him at all; but, as it is, I have done what I could to render his visit here safe, and, if he has taken his own way, it is no fault of mine."

Rose hesitated, as she asked slowly:

"But why did you bring him here at all? If it was so dangerous for him, it must be so for us too."

Her guardian frowned slightly as he answered:

"Don't ask questions about things that you are not expected to understand, child. This young man has a claim on me, and we are doing business together. He has orders from my best customers, for any amount of money that he may require."

"But why has he come to London, if he is an enemy?"

"Because he has a private revenge to wreak against a man whom he cannot touch. I have warned him against it, but he would not be warned. He must do as he can now. One comfort, he will not be found in this house."

Rose sighed as she replied:

"I'm afraid not, uncle. He must have heard something that the man said when he was talking to you, for I found that he had opened the door and was actually coming into the room where you were."

Bampton turned pale as he ejaculated:

"Coming into the room where Fisher was! Why, that would have been suicide. Did you stop him?"

"Yes, uncle, and then he told me, with a low bow, that he would do anything that I told him, but that he could not stay in this house another minute, for that he saw he had brought danger on the inmates. Then he went down to the boat-house, and rowed away over the river."

Bampton was evidently very uneasy at the story he heard, for he asked Rose in a tone of concern:

"Did he not change his dress at all?"

"Not a bit. He rowed off just as he was, in his

blue coat and white waistcoat, as if he was going to a party."

"Which way did he take?" asked the smuggler, with the same anxiety as before.

Rose pointed up the river.

"That way. He said, as he went, that I need not feel the smallest anxiety about him, as he knew the way very well, and had been on the river before. I wonder where he has gone."

Bampton sighed heavily, as he answered:

"I don't know, child. I wash my hands of the consequences. If he comes to harm, it will be because he has thrown away the advice of those who know the danger."

Then he seemed to be thinking, for he muttered:

"I wonder where he can— No, that is too absurd—it is not possible; but I may as well see whether it is possible."

He went out of the back part of the house, which looked on the water, and sent his searching glance up and down the stream among the shipping to find if he could the little wherry that usually was moored in a boat-house under the wall that bordered the river. The wherry was nowhere to be seen; but there were others plying their vocation along the stream, and one of them was opposite the house, as the smuggler looked out. The waterman saw him, and scenting a fare, raised his hand inquiringly, being rewarded by a nod which soon brought the wherry over to the steps, when Bampton said to Rose:

"Keep the house till I come back. You know what to do."

Rose nodded, and the smuggler stepped into the boat, and gave the order:

"Up the stream till I tell you to stop. I want to go up to Richmond, if I can."

CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD DUKE.

Down by the river Thames, at and around Richmond, are, and always have been, a number of handsome residences, with broad lawns and summer-houses, where the summer is lounged away by the rich, in the comfort and luxury that no nation knows to enjoy so well as the English.

The river is covered with pleasure-boats, and the lawns slope to the water, always terminated by steps for the landing of passengers, while the little boat-houses stud the edge of the bank at every mansion.

On the evening of the day when Blakeley took his departure from the house of Bampton in the city, a gentleman in a little wherry rowed leisurely up to one of these mansions, and fastened his boat at the foot of the steps, to the iron ring that was placed there for that purpose.

He was obviously a gentleman of leisure, easily seen in those days, when the rank of the person was indicated by his clothing in a way that no longer prevails. The old knee breeches and powder of the last century had not yet gone out entirely, though it was already accounted old-fashioned; and the gentleman who tied his boat to the foot of the steps was one of the newer race.

He wore the blue coat and brass buttons that then formed the costume of a gentleman who wished to be considered "in the style;" and his Hessian boots and tight pantaloons were well calculated to set off his figure. His hat was of the steeple-crowned pattern that had not yet gone out, and he wore a watch and dangling seals that showed him to be a man of wealth and respectability.

He landed at the foot of the lawn, and strolled up the narrow path that led to the house, with the air of a man who knew his way.

There was no one on the lawn, and the house had a deserted appearance, as he went toward it; but as he came within sight of the windows of the side of the mansion, an old man came out and accosted him, civilly, with the remark:

"Would the gentleman like to see the house? I am the porter, sir; and the pictures alone is worth a shilling."

The gentleman smiled as he answered:

"I'm not much after pictures, my friend. I came to see, if, by chance, the duke might be at home."

"No, sir. His grace ain't at home; that is to say, not at home to everybody—"

"Then he is in the house?" asked the stranger, in a low tone, as he gazed at the house with an air of great eagerness. "If you can put me in communication with him for a minute or two, I am ready to give you a guinea. Do you hear?"

The old gardener and porter—for he was both in that house—looked at the other in a doubtful way as he repeated:

"A guinea? a real, golden guinea?"

The stranger pulled out of his pocket a guinea, and held it so that the old man could see it plainly. The effect was immediate, for the glitter of avarice was so plain that the stranger put the piece back into his pocket, with the remark:

"There it is, as you see; but you can't get it unless I see the duke, face to face."

The porter hesitated.

"But his grace ain't supposed to be at home," he urged. "I might lose my place if I told him that any one was here. He don't like to be disturbed, when he comes down here for quiet."

"Then he has come here for quiet?" asked the other keenly.

"In course he has, or he wouldn't say so. He comes all alone, and keeps in the library. He's there now."

The stranger surveyed the house, with the same keen, eager air as before, as he asked:

"Which is the library window?"

"Round the corner of the house. It is the only one that has the blinds up. His grace is in there. I tell ye what I *could* do, sir."

"Well, what?"

The stranger saw that he had roused the old man's avarice, and that he was scheming how to earn the guinea, without, at the same time, displeasing his master.

"I could go to the river, and go out fishing. It ain't to be supposed I have eyes in the back of my head, and if you was to get into the house like a thief, as it might be, there ain't no one to stop you. His grace is alone, till the man comes up to take him home to Lunnion at night."

"How long before he comes?"

"When the bell strikes nine, and not a minute after."

The stranger pulled out the guinea and handed it to the old man, saying quietly:

"It is a fine night for fishing, and, if you stay long enough, I will leave another for you at the steps, under the loose stone at the top of the flight. Look for it when you come back."

The old porter, clutching the coin eagerly, and hobbled away without another word, while the stranger, after looking to see if he was really going where he had promised, took his way to the house, and paused before the windows on one side. As he looked up, he saw that the old man had spoken the truth. The windows at the side of the house that looked to the south, were shut up, with the curtains drawn; but one of the lower windows had the curtains withdrawn and the room within gave signs of occupancy.

Surveying the mansion more closely, the stranger perceived that the room was near one of the side entrances, and without any hesitation he took his way toward it.

There was no lawn on that side of the house, which was of the largest size and almost a palace. The grass was superseded by a paved court, and the sound of his footsteps echoed from side to side as he advanced.

Straight to the door he went, and opened it, to find himself in a hall paved with marble, in a style that showed the building was the property of a rich and well-taught person with good taste.

A little to the right of the entrance was the door, which he thought must lead to the room the porter had said was occupied; so he went to it boldly, and opened it to look in.

There, in front of a blazing wood fire, that seemed to be a work of supererogation in that pleasant weather, he saw an old gentleman in a large chair with a book on his knees, from which he had evidently been reading when he fell asleep.

The face of the stranger changed.

When he went in it had worn the frown of one who has made up his mind to do something desperate; but the spectacle of the sleeper in his chair wrought a sudden change, and he shook his head and muttered:

"No—no, I cannot do that. It would be the act of a coward. I did not think he was so helpless."

He came close to the old man, and looked down at him in a peculiar way. The expression of bitter hate had given place to one of astonishment and something very like admiration, for the face and figure of the old man were both very handsome.

He had the peculiar, short-lipped, aristocratic countenance, that marks the man of old Norman descent, then much more common than now.

His snowy hair was tied in a knot behind his head with a black bag, in the style that had not then gone out of fashion, and he wore the knee-breeches and velvet coat of a bygone generation.

The stranger looked down on him in silence for some minutes, and then spoke aloud, in a tone that he strove to render low, so as to wake the other gradually.

"Whenever his grace the Duke of Rutland is pleased to wake, I am here to have a little talk with him," he said.

The old duke woke up with a start at the first word, and remained staring at the other with the expression of a man who has not quite decided whether he is awake or asleep.

That this was the case was manifest, as he said in a dreamy way:

"Blake, is it you? I am not able to go on without—"

Then he suddenly stopped and rubbed his

eyes, while he looked round the room with an air of extreme surprise.

It seemed to dawn on him that something was wrong, for his gaze came back to the young man who was standing over him, and he wore a look of ghastly terror as he whispered, rather than spoke:

"In God's name, who are you?"

The young stranger looked him in the eye with a gaze that seemed to be penetrating his very marrow, as he retorted with the question:

"Whom think you that I am, duke?"

The old man stared at him with a face that was growing more ghastly every minute, as he faltered:

"How should I know, sir?"

The young stranger drew his face down closer to the other, as he said slowly:

"Look closer, duke—closer. Did you never see my face before?"

The old man stared at him, and was unable to answer. His confusion was a better answer than words. It was clear that he thought he *had* seen the face before.

"You remember it, I see," said the stranger.

"It is that of the man you murdered for giving you a hand when all the world was on the other side. Now he has come for you, and your place is beside him, in a dishonored tomb!"

As he spoke he watched the old man carefully, and saw that he was shaking with superstitious terror; for in those days there was a fund of faith and superstition in the highest society, that has long since vanished.

The Duke of Rutland thought he saw the ghost of the man who had befriended him in his youth, come back to him in his old age.

With a tremor that showed how thoroughly he was cowed, he stammered:

"Blake, Blake, I am not fit to die. Don't be hard on me. I will do what I can to atone for the past, if you will let me. You don't know what remorse I have suffered for that deed, into which I was forced. I did not betray you willingly; it was to save my own life. It was the villain, Castlereagh, that persuaded me, and I did it."

Blakeley (for it was that audacious man himself who had thus put his head into the mouth of the lion), saw that the old man was completely in his power, and that his fears would lead him to do anything he was bid, if the fortunate deception could be kept up. In a hollow tone he answered, therefore:

"Where is the child, the girl, that was in Galway?"

The old man trembled violently.

"Before God, I never harmed her. She was taken away by the orders of the Lord Lieutenant, and I have never seen her since."

"Liar," interrupted Blake in his deepest tones, but with no appearance of passion. "Do you hope to deceive me? She is here, and you have her in your power."

"As God is my judge, no!" cried the old peer excitedly. "She was taken away, and the country never saw her again. I know that I have done wickedly; but of that, at least, I am innocent. I would not have hurt the daughter, as well as the son. The Blake's daughter was carried off by the orders of Castlereagh, but I heard, afterward, that the Ribbonmen had rescued her, and taken her off somewhere."

Blakeley, or Blake, listened to him intently, but made no answer, and the duke, with the eagerness of one who is trying to justify himself, added:

"You must know this, if you see everything, now that you are dead."

Blake suddenly put his powerful hand on the other's arm, with a grip that startled the duke, as he said:

"Fool! Can ye not see and feel? This is The Blake himself, the son of the man whom you betrayed to death, and he has come to have his revenge. Tell me what has become of the child, or I will tear the heart out of you."

As he spoke he grasped the other, with a strength that showed how helpless the duke would be, if it came to a tussle, and shook him violently.

"Where is the girl?" he hissed in the duke's ear. "Tell me or you die, and rot on a dunghill."

The old man, completely overcome by terror and remorse, stammered:

"My God, I cannot; I am not able. Bampton can tell you, if any one."

Blakeley released him instantly to ask:

"Bampton? Why? how?"

"He was the head of the Ribbonmen," said the duke earnestly. "He ought to know. He bought his freedom, as I bought mine, by treason to the rest, and he had his reward. Why don't you go to him? I did but a part of it. He was the chief informer. If you are The Blake, he is the man that you should kill."

Blakeley stared at the old man for a moment in silence, and then released him, with the remark:

"You are wrong. You are the man that it is necessary to kill now. You know who I am, and can betray me. I must kill you, to save my own life. You understand that, duke?"

CHAPTER XII.

A STRONG GHOST.

THE BLAKE had expected that the old man would wilt as soon as he heard the sentence; but to his surprise the duke straightened up and said in his proudest tone:

"Of course you can do a murder if you please; but it would be the act of a coward, and that is what your father would never have done."

The young man laughed aloud at the other.

"It is well for you to quote my father to me," he said. "You! the man that betrayed him to a disgraceful death, can claim mercy from his son, at a time like this, in his name! You are my victim, and I am the executioner of God, to perform his vengeance."

As he spoke he grasped the old nobleman again, and the duke struggled violently, but without avail, as the strong young man choked him down into the corner of the chair, and began to strangle him, till the eyes of the old man stood out in his head, and his husky breathing told how nearly he was gone. Then, when he was powerless, the young man released him, and said sternly:

"For this time you are safe; but it is only on condition that you take an oath, at once, never to betray the fact that I have been in London. Are you willing to do that to save your life?"

The duke inclined his head, for he was too weak to speak, and Blakeley dictated to him an oath of secrecy, so tremendous that the old nobleman trembled while he took it; for it appealed to his superstition forcibly. When it was over Blake said to him:

"Now, duke, you have a son who is in the navy, have you not?"

"Yes," was the low reply, with a look at the other as if he was surprised at the question.

"Very well," said Blakeley, "I shall meet him. When you hear that he has gone, and that your son was killed in action, remember that it was the hand of The Blake that laid him low."

As he spoke, he was about to retire; when the old duke seemed to be struck with his last words, for he cried out:

"He is more likely to lay you low, Irish traitor that you are! He belongs to a race that never quailed before their foes, when there was anything like equality between them. You will never meet him."

Blakeley turned round to say:

"When I am gone, look at this card, and remember your oath. You shall hear from me in not many days."

So saying, he threw a card at the old duke and left the room, while the old noble, now that the excitement was over, sunk back into his chair completely exhausted, and hardly able to realize it had not all been a dream. The only tangible proof lay in the little card in his hand, and this it was that he regarded as he drew forth a tinder-box; for it was rapidly growing dark in the house, though there was still more or less light outside.

When at last he was able to read it, he found it to be an ordinary card, with the name—written on it:

CAPTAIN JOHNSTON BLAKELEY, U. S. N.
U. S. S. Wasp.

The duke stared at the card stupidly, and the whole thing seemed to him still more like a dream than before. He rose, went to the window, and saw the form of the old porter, who was coming up the path toward the house, whistling. To the duke the sight of the porter was welcome; for it promised to relieve him of the horrible nightmare that was pressing on him.

Rapping sharply on the window, he called in the old man, whom he questioned at once as to whether he had seen any one on the grounds that day. The old man swore, by all that was holy, that he had not met a human being all day, except the people passing on the river.

To be sure, he felt a twinge or two about the lie, but he comforted himself by the feel of the money in his pocket, and the reflection that the stranger must have been a gentleman, or he would not have kept his word about leaving the other guinea under the stone at the top of the steps.

"Then, how, in the name of all that is wonderful, could the man have got in?" asked the duke angrily. "Where have you been, sirrah?"

"On the bank a-fishing, please your grace, and I'm sure no one could have got in here without my seeing him," said old Green, stolidly.

And not a word more could the duke get out of him, though he questioned him closely. The fact was that Green was pretty thoroughly frightened about losing his place, and he saw that something had happened that he had not expected. He had let the stranger in, thinking him only some one who had a place at court that he wanted to petition the duke about.

Something had evidently happened; but what it was, Green could not tell. His master had a strange expression on his face, and the appearance of a man who had seen a ghost.

Green, who knew well enough what the ghost had been, was yet puzzled as to the identity of

the gentleman who had paid him so liberally for the interview which had occurred by such wonderful luck, and at last ventured to ask the duke, who did not apparently wish him to go, after his usual custom:

"Did your grace see anything bad?"

The duke favored him with a quick, suspicious glance, as he said:

"Never mind—no—I must have been asleep and dreamed it. Go to the kitchen and tell them to get me some tea. I shall go back to town, as soon as they can put the horses in."

Then, as old Green retired, the duke muttered to himself:

"I must send a description of him to headquarters."

CHAPTER XIII.

ON THE RIVER.

WHEN Blakeley went out of the house, that evening, he knew that the old nobleman he had left behind him was too much demoralized by the treatment he had received, to think of organizing any pursuit even if the memory of his oath was not enough to restrain him.

He leisurely entered his boat, in the sight of several people who were rowing by, and took his way down the river, in the deepening twilight, as if he had no other design but that of a quiet stroll on the water in the summer sunset.

As he rode away from the lawn of the palace, he noticed that the river was covered with boats, called out by the beauty of the evening, and very soon had lost himself in the crowd. He knew that it would not do to hurry, or show any symptoms of haste, till he had gotten well out of sight of the palace of the duke behind a bend of the river.

Then he began to stretch out to his best, having taken off his coat and waistcoat and laid them down in the bottom of the boat so as to hide, as far as possible, the incongruity between his dress and the hard work he was performing, in the boat. The spectacle of a gentleman, rowing for a wager, in those days, was not as common as to-day, and the spectacle might have excited curiosity, which Blakeley was anxious to avoid.

Therefore he lingered along for the first two miles; after which, finding himself in the more crowded parts of the river, near the city, he began to row his hardest and was about to run into the Pool, when he was hailed from another wherry, which came up beside him, and he recognized the face of Bampton, full of anxiety, as he asked:

"Where have you been? I have been very anxious about you?"

Blakeley smiled as he answered:

"Taking a row? You seem to have been doing the same. Will you change boats now? I want to speak to you."

Bampton turned to his waterman and said to him:

"How much do I owe you? This gentleman and I are friends."

The waterman named his price—a stiff one—and the smuggler paid it without any haggling, when the transfer was effected, and Blakeley and Bampton were once more together.

Then the smuggler asked the other, as they rowed away:

"How could you be so rash? The police, if they once see, and have any reason to suspect, will catch you as sure as fate."

Blakeley curled his lip as he said:

"Mr. Bampton, you and I are in the same boat, physically; but not in any other sense. You are in the country of your birth, and able to face your friends and foes openly. I am an exile, and have but little to interest me in life. What matter is it to me if there is danger? Life is sweet to some men; but not to me. How can it be?"

Bampton seemed to be puzzled, as he asked:

"What do you mean? You have a good position in another country, and can do anything you wish."

"Yes," returned the other with the same bitter tone, "so long as I do not step on the shores of the country I was born in. Such is the doctrine of this country that calls itself the land of liberty. Once an Englishman, always an Englishman, is their doctrine. But suppose he be an Irishman, how then? Why, he is to be considered always an outcast from grace, and made a slave to the conquerors, to the end of time. I am weary of such a life, and if I lose it in getting the vengeance that I crave, I shall be willing to die, as Paul Jones did, with none to mourn me. The man without a country is the nearest to hell, of any one on the face of the earth."

He spoke in an absent-minded way, as if he had almost forgotten to whom he was speaking, and Bampton made no reply till they had gotten down by the city, where the darkness came down on them and the lights of London were the only companions in the gloom on the river. Then the smuggler asked him suddenly:

"And where have you been, after all? I ask, because you may have run into danger, without knowing it, and we may be followed."

Blakeley shook his head.

"The danger is past, whatever it might have

been. I have been to the house where my father's foe lived, and have told him what he has to expect. I swear, if it had not been that he was an old man, I would have strangled him, as he sat there."

Bampton seemed aghast, as he repeated:

"You have been to the Duke of Rutland! Where, in Heaven's name?"

"At his palace, near Richmond. I found him there, all alone, as luck would have it, and got at him in his library. He thought I was a ghost at first, and conjured me not to take him with me; but I soon convinced him that I was flesh and blood, and left my card at his grace's disposition, when I came away."

Bampton uttered a cry of incredulous horror.

"Your card! Good Heavens, man, are you mad? If they catch you, it will be a banging matter. You are an officer of the enemy, and a spy. And I shall be in danger for harboring you too! You are determined to ruin me!"

Blakeley directed the course of the wherry to the landing at the foot of the steps, that led to the smuggler's house, before he answered. Then he said:

"Mr. Bampton, I have no wish to incommode you in any way, and therefore I shall not burden your hospitality any longer. Will you sell me this boat? If you will, I can escape by myself, to night, before any description of me is in the hands of the police. I will not bring any further danger on your house."

Bampton seemed to be struck by some feeling that overcame his fears for his own safety, for he said hastily:

"By no means, sir. You are my guest and the son of the best friend I ever had on the face of the earth. I will take care of you, and if you choose to bring disaster on me and mine, no one has a better right. You must come in. If you wish to leave the country in the same secret way that you came in, I can help you."

"Thanks!" was the cold reply, as the American drew in his oars, "but I prefer to rely on myself alone. I will only ask you one question, before I take my departure. Who is that girl that you have in the house?"

The question seemed to confuse the smuggler more than one might have imagined from its simple nature. He stammered:

"What girl? Rose, do you mean?"

"The same. Who is she?"

"She is my ward, sir, and under my protection."

"Who was her father?" pursued the American; quietly. "Come, Bampton, I may as well tell you that the duke told me you have the knowledge of the whereabouts of the child that was taken away by the lord lieutenant."

Bampton stammered more than ever, as he said, hastily:

"Come into the house, if you want to talk about these things. We shall be overheard here. Will you not come?"

"No, I will not," was the obstinate answer. "I want to know the truth here and at once. Is that girl Rose Lynch or not?"

"As God is my judge, Blake, she is not," answered the smuggler, earnestly. "If you want to know who she is, I implore you to come into my house and accept my hospitality, where we shall be out of danger from the boats that begin to patrol the river very soon."

Blakeley seemed to hesitate a little, but on the smuggler renewing the invitation for the third time, with great earnestness, he yielded so far as to go into the house by the rear, leaving the wherry at the foot of the steps, in the boat-house.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REVELATION.

INSIDE the smuggler's house that night when the two men got in all was dark; but they had not been in long when the light of a lamp shone out from the little parlor, and the smuggler showed his guest a chair, and sat down opposite to him, saying:

"Now sir, The Blake is entitled to a full account of the child that I have raised as my own."

But after he had said this he seemed to be as much at a loss how to proceed as before, for he fell into a silence that provoked from his guest the question:

"Have you forgotten the story? I will help you. Were you ever the chief of the Ribbon-men?"

Bampton bowed his head slowly, as he answered:

"I was at one time. The knowledge came to you by one of them. He was one also. It is twenty years ago now, nearly. I had left the active superintendence of the order, when the rebellion of 'Ninety-eight took place. I was known as the head, but I exercised no direct authority over any one. They came to me to ask for advice and help; and that was all. It was at the time that your father was betrayed that I took the only active part I did during the whole rebellion. His capture sent a panic through the whole of our cause. The signal had been set for informers to begin their accursed trade, and when was ever an Irish rebellion found that there were not also Irish informers, to betray their own countrymen? You know

all about it, Blake. You have suffered from it, and you think I never did. You are mistaken. I, too, was betrayed and lost all I had by the treason of an informer. You do not know who I was at one time, before I went to the sea, and hid all trace of my being an Irishman, from very shame of my fellow-countrymen, who had sold their birthright for less than a mess of pottage. Well, that will not interest you much. I was not of your class, anyhow. I was but a peasant, and you gentry think we have no feelings. But I loved your father: for he had shown me a kindness when I needed it sorely. When he knew that he would be taken, he sent for me, and confided to me a secret, that I have not told for all these years. He told me that he had hidden, for the benefit of his children, and especially of yourself, a sum of money. He described the hiding-place, and told me how to find it. When you were taken away, as a boy, and smuggled on board the ship that went to America, it was understood that I should follow, with your mother and the child, that was yet too young to travel, as the rest were. I was to hide them in my house in London; for at that time I had begun the trade which has since raised me to the riches I now have. The time was set, and when the officers came to your father's house, they found only him there, after the collapse of the rebellion, waiting to be arrested. They had expected to find all his family, and it was well known that the attorney-general had made great importance of taking all together, on account of the pressure he could bring to bear on your father, by appealing to his affections, to save your mother and sister from the effects of the attainder, that would ensue to all his family, in the descending line. Your grandfather had steadfastly refused to join in any rebellious movement, for he had foreseen that it must end in failure. We, who were younger, thought that we knew better, and laughed to scorn all thoughts of prudence. Your father was the only one in the whole of the chiefs, that, from the first, knew the movement was going to be a failure, and yet went on with it, though he knew it would be the ruin of all his family, and end in his own execution. He only strove to secure the future of the children that God had given him. You were one, and your sister, Blanche, the other. She was with your mother, who refused to leave your father till the very end, when he ordered her away, and she went, with much reluctance. Then it was that I assumed the charge of mother and daughter, with the money that I had taken from the hiding-place. I knew that there was no one who knew of the deposit but your father, and I might, if I had followed the example of many of those who had made their profit out of the misfortunes of the rebels of 'Ninety-eight, have stolen all the money, and no one would have been the wiser. Instead of that, I took your mother and sister, and brought them here. People thought that they were my sister and niece. The child was taught to call me uncle, as she began to talk, and does not know, to-day, but what I am her true and lawful uncle. Your mother—but you know what became of her. She died, soon after hearing the news of your father's death on the scaffold, and the child has ever since been in my house. Rose Lynch, as you know her, is Rose Blake by right, and your sister. The money that I took from the hiding-place, where I was directed to hunt by your father, has formed the foundation of my present fortune, and I have kept a strict account of it, to hand to you whenever you demand it. There is the story, sir, and now you know how anxious I must be, if you are caught and traced to this house. What will become of your sister? At present she does not know anything of her birth, and I have kept it away from her carefully. If she finds it out, what shall we do to keep the knowledge of her father's fate from her also? It is one thing to tell her that you are her brother and alive, and another thing altogether, to say to her, that her father was executed for treason, and that her brother is a foe to the land in which he was born, and to the flag which his father fought to preserve, in the old wars, before he joined the rebellion. It is a hard thing to tell a woman that her brother is a fugitive from justice, in his own land, sir."

Blakeley listened attentively, and when the other had quite finished he said in a low tone:

"You may be right. I am not saying that you are not; but God forgive the men who have driven me from my own land, and made it a sin to me to look on my own sister. Mr. Bampton, you have done very kindly by my family; but one thing you have done wrong. You should have told my sister, long ago, who she was, and not have suffered her to grow up in ignorance of the facts."

Bampton colored deeply as he said:

"I know it. Remember, however, that I did not know, till lately, that you were alive. The ship that took you was reported as having been sunk, and we believed it, for some years. When I heard, at last, that you had escaped from the wreck alive, and had been put into the American navy, it was too late to tell her you were alive. Your mother had died; your

father had been executed; and she had been taught she was my niece. Why should I blast her fresh life by the sorrow that could do her no good, and must cause her great distress. I brought her up in ignorance of the truth. To be frank, I did not think, at the time, that you would ever come back alive, and I had a dim idea that she might never know but what I was her natural protector. Don't think too hardly of me, Mr. Blake. I am but a man, and she had grown very dear to me. I had made up my mind to tell the truth, as I have done now, whenever you came here; but I put it off as long as I could. Now I suppose that you will take her away from me, in my old age, and tell her that the man she has been accustomed to think of as her uncle, is but a peasant, and not worthy to associate with one in whose veins flows the blood of the Blakes of Castle Blake."

Blakeley listened without showing any emotion, till the other had finished, when he inquired calmly:

"Did it never occur to you that you might deny all that you have said, and claim the child any way?"

The smuggler colored deeply as he replied:

"Once or twice it has; I will not deny it. I have thought how easy it would be to have denounced you, and taken the benefit of the fortune, whoever else might claim it. I have tried to persuade myself that I had no call to tell you anything at all, and that the money I had made by my own skill and boldness belonged to me."

"And to what conclusion did you come?" asked the other, with the same impassive demeanor.

Bampton struck his hand on his knee, and uttered an oath as he answered:

"I couldn't—I couldn't. The truth would come out, in spite of myself! If your father had not given it to me, in trust for his child, how could I ever have made the fortune? A man cannot make money till he has money to make it with. It is yours, with the interest for every year compounded. You are the owner, and I am only the trustee. Sir, whenever you wish to see your sister, she is in this house."

Blakeley had been watching him closely as he spoke, and now he broke in hastily:

"By no means, by no means, Bampton. You have done what not one man of a million would have done. It may be the best in the end that she should not know anything of the past. God knows there is not much to make her proud of it. But I should like to see her again. Why should we not all leave this hated country and go to free America, where there are no kings or king's officers, to hang men for striving to live freely?"

The smuggler looked around the room with a strange expression, as he replied slowly:

"If you give the order, you have the right. I told your messenger, when he first came over the ocean, to arrange for the signals, by which we were to meet, that I recognized your right to give the order, as the head of the Blake family. You cannot say but what we have kept faith with you. You were met on the coast, by Mat Blake, and he told you where I should be. You have had all the information asked for, and we have not hindered you, in any way, from doing as you pleased. If you wish to resume your sister's guardianship, and take her from me, you have the right; though you had none of the care of her during her infancy. But how if she is unhappy?"

Blake nodded his head.

"I see; I d'd not think of that, Bampton. Well, what shall be done? Would you be inclined to give up the house that you have here; come on the sea with me; and trust to the prizes we shall take, to pay you for the fortune you leave behind?"

Bampton seemed to be hesitating, as he answered:

"You forget one thing, sir."

"And what is that?"

"That your sister has been brought up in England, and that I have never attempted to influence her mind in any way."

Blake seemed puzzled as he asked:

"What do you mean?"

Bampton drew closer, to say in a guarded way:

"I mean that she has been to school in England, and has imbibed notions that will not yield to anything but a long lapse of years. Would you like your sister to hate you, and all your people? She has no idea that anything can come out of Ireland but bad. She has seen nothing but good, about England, and you will seem to her unnatural, when you wage war with her. Did you never think of that?"

Blakeley uttered a deep groan, and hid his face in his hands, as he listened to the words of the other. Then he said, in a low stifled voice:

"There is only one thing left to fill the cup, Bampton."

"What do you mean?" asked the other, in his turn surprised.

"That she should marry an Englishman, and learn to hate her own country," groaned the Irishman, bitterly. "God forgive you, Bampton: you did not know what you were doing, when you brought up this child. If I had never

come here, it might have all been well; but as it is, my coming has brought nothing but misery and disgrace."

Truly the position of the exile was a bitter one, as it always must be, when a man has no country. As long as he had been on the other side of the Atlantic, Blakeley had not thought of the position he would occupy when he went home to the place of his birth, and found his family ostracised and the house in which he had been born a mass of ruins. Then he began to realize, for the first time, the hard lot which had come on him; and the added bitterness of heart that he now experienced made him feel as if he wished he had never come at all.

Bampton, on the other hand, sat looking at him with a face full of sympathy and pity, that showed how he was moved, and at last said:

"Don't take on so, sir. It is by no means impossible that we may escape; and, if so, it is certain that the first duty of your sister, now that she knows she has a brother, will rest with her own family. Women are ruled by their affections, a good deal more than men, as you will find, when you are as old as me, and have been married as long as I was, before my poor wife died. If you would like to see your sister I will fetch her now—that is, if—"

He started nervously as he spoke, and cast his eyes at a hole in the wall, that no one else would have noticed.

The dim light of the candle that illuminated the room itself was matched by a small beam of brighter light, that streamed out from this hole in the wall.

"She is in there, and has heard all that we have said," he whispered hastily. "Never mind. It may all be for the best. I will go and summon her. You must meet sometimes, and now is the best of times."

CHAPTER XV.

THE PHANTOM SHIP.

His majesty's brig-of-war, Reindeer, with all sail set, was plowing the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, off the west coast of Ireland, a few days after the events in London, recorded in the last chapter, when the captain, who was pacing the quarter-deck uneasily, was startled out of his sullen reverie by the cry of the lookout:

"Sail ho, sir! A ship on the weather quarter, looks like the Yankee."

Lord John immediately turned his glass on the place indicated by the hail, and saw a ship, of swift and graceful mold, standing up from the southwest, toward the coast of Ireland, on the same tack as the Reindeer.

The land was plainly in sight and, it hardly seemed possible that an American ship should have a commander so audacious as to penetrate into the very thickest of the enemy's cruisers, at a time like that, when the French war had just been terminated in triumph, by the first abdication of Napoleon, and the British ships swarmed on every coast, especially their own.

The Reindeer, therefore, was put about to meet the stranger by her captain, with no idea that the lookout could have made anything but a most egregious mistake, excusable only by reason of his eagerness to report something.

Through the glass, the strange ship appeared about the same size as the Reindeer, though she was ship-rigged, with three masts.

That she was a man-of-war, was plain from the neatness of her spars, as far as they were visible under the cloud of sail that she was carrying. When sighted by the captain, she was about three or four miles off, and coming down fast on the brig.

Lord John hauled his wind, and made to meet the stranger, with the disadvantage of having the wind against him and therefore being at the worst point for a brig, in case the strange vessel had any desire to avoid him. As he prepared to meet the other, with the wise precaution of a man who neglects no chances, he beat to quarters.

The brig was a good sailer on the wind, but, in beating up, she was slow, on account of her model, which was of the broad and bluff order that then prevailed on most British ships-of-war, on the theory that they required stable platforms for their guns, and that a swift model meant that the vessel was better to run away than to fight.

Very soon after the Reindeer had started on her new career, the rapid advance of the stranger, coming down, as she was, with the favoring wind and a cloud of canvas, brought the two within a mile of each other, when the strange ship suddenly hauled her wind, and went off to the open ocean, without answering her signals that the brig hung out, to find whether she were an enemy or a friend.

As this happened, Lord John had an opportunity to see the whole length and breadth of the stranger, and saw that she excelled his own brig in size, though not so much as to excite any fear in his mind of the result of a contest.

"Bunt," he said, to the first lieutenant, who was pacing the deck, at a respectful distance below his commander, "come here. I want to speak to you."

Mr. Bunt came up, and the captain continued:

"That is the Yankee, *sure*, or she would not behave in that suspicious manner. But her captain must be a bold fellow, to come here. Why, he will run into the Warspite, if he holds on that tack."

The Warspite was a seventy-four-gun ship, that had been detached to the west of Ireland station, a few weeks before, to watch the outside line, with the hope that she might come across some of the large American frigates, supposed to be cruising in the Atlantic, trying what they could pick up.

Bunt looked at the enemy's ship with a grave look, as if he did not like to see her.

"I'd sooner see the Warspite, than hear about her, my lord," he said. "That stranger is very much like a Yankee sloop-of-war, I saw in the harbor of New York, when I was coming away. She was called the 'Ornet—I mean the Hornet, my lord, and was the very counterpart of this one. She took the Peacock in no time, as one might say, and the Peacock was the same force as this brig, except that she had two guns more than we have."

Mr. Bunt, being now quite sober, was very particular about his aspirates, and corrected himself frequently.

Lord John Manners made no answer for some minutes, during which the brig kept on her course after the stranger. Then he observed:

"She sails like a witch on the wind, doesn't she, Bunt? We shall never catch her at this rate."

Indeed, the strange ship was obviously increasing her distance from the brig, as soon as she set to work to beat up, and it was plain that the Reindeer could not catch her, if the other vessel was disposed to avoid the encounter.

This fact became patent when they had sailed along for another mile or two, when the sails of the strange ship were reduced to her fighting canvas, and yet she outsailed the brig.

But Lord John was so eager to come up with the ship that he ordered the royals set, and the stunsails extended on either side of the ordinary canvas, till the Reindeer was a pyramid of white duck from her trucks to her spar-deck.

Then she plunged through the waves like a whale in a chase, but made such slow progress that the stranger was able to hold her own under topgallantsails alone without setting her royals.

The captain of the British brig was of that dogged temperament that does not easily despair of success, and he held on till the greater part of the day had spent itself and the coast of Ireland had sunk below the horizon, when the increasing force of the wind began to make the brig roll and bury her under her crowd of canvas, and he was reluctantly obliged to give the order to shorten sail to a safer degree of canvas.

When the sun set, the stranger was still at about the same distance as when they had first discovered their inferiority in swiftness, and maintained her course as if she was not sensible of the fact that she was being pursued.

As night came on, the captain sent a couple of the best watchmen in the brig to the knight-heads to peer out over the water; and the rising of the moon in about an hour after sunset made the chase the more easy, as they could keep the stranger in sight all night.

At nine in the evening, when this occurred, the captain sent the men from quarters, and allowed the watch to be set, with strict orders that the watch below should sleep in their clothes, and be ready to turn out to quarters at the first tap of the drum.

Then the captain went to his own dinner, and invited the first lieutenant to join him, for he had an idea that Bunt was a very good man to give advice.

The dinner was spread, but the bottle circulated with less freedom than usual, for both officers felt the responsibility of the chase they were pursuing.

"Well, Bunt," asked the captain, when they had eaten their dinner in silence, "and what do you make of this fellow taking the course he has? Does he want to run or not?"

Bunt shook his head gravely.

"I'm thinking, my lord, that he is trying to entice us out to some place where he will turn on us and give us all we want."

"What armament do you think she carries?" asked the young nobleman next. "Any long guns to pick us to pieces in the usual Yankee fashion?"

Bunt shook his head again.

"I don't think it, my lord. The 'Or—I mean the Hornet, had nothing but carronades; but they were thirty-twos, and that is eight pounds a gun more than we carry. Their game is to get alongside us in the night, and try to sink us at one broadside. That is the way the Hornet served the Peacock. She knocked her all to bits at one or two broadsides. But she never ran away like this fellow does."

"I wonder where the Warspite can be?" observed Lord John, in a musing way. "If that fellow had heard that she was close by, he couldn't have been more prudent."

"Maybe he has seen her, and that is the

reason he is trying to draw us out of the way. If I were you, my lord—"

And here Bunt paused and hesitated, for he was about to offer advice to his superior unasked, and that was a delicate thing to do with a man of Lord John's impatient temperament.

"Well, what would you do, Bunt?" asked Lord John.

"I would give up the chase and go back to the coast of Ireland, my lord. If that fellow has any idea of bringing us to action, and trying to take us by superior force at a blow, the turning out of the chase will make him show his colors; and if he turns to fight us, we shall have at least the advantage of choosing the ground, and of being the defending party."

Lord John did not seem to relish the advice, for he said:

"But that would look like running away. Confound it, Bunt, I'm not afraid of the fellow!"

"I know that, my lord; but it is the part of a brave man to serve the king to the best of his ability. We can't catch that fellow on the tack he is on now; but I have an idea that if we turn round and run, we shall have a chance to find whether he has the best of us at all points of sailing, or whether we can hold our own before the wind. If he wants to fight us, that will settle it."

"Confound it, Bunt, I don't know but what you're right, after all. We can only try it. If he comes after us, we shall know that he is dangerous, and can fight him as he comes. He can't do that without coming alongside."

So saying, the commander of the Reindeer rung a bell on the table, and told the steward to "give his compliments to the officer of the deck, and ask him to step down-stairs into the cabin."

The form of Mr. Howard (a sprig of aristocracy who had drifted into the Reindeer because she was commanded by a nobleman, and who passed his time in lamenting that his lot had not fallen in the times when Nelson had not yet destroyed the French navy, so that he might have had a chance of promotion) was soon visible in the cabin, and Lord John greeted him affably, with the remark:

"Glad to see you, Howard. Take a glass of wine with me. How's the weather outside, and how's the chase?"

Mr. Howard took his wine with a freedom that contrasted strongly with the bashful way of Bunt in the cabin, and answered:

"It's blowing a stiff gale now, sir, and the chase is still at the same distance as before. I've had to take in the topgallantsails, to keep the brig from burying too much, but it don't seem to make much difference. We can't catch that fellow anyway."

"Just the conclusion I had come to myself, Howard. Put the brig about quietly, and let her scud. She will bear more canvas, and we will try whether the chase will be able to come up with us on that tack."

Mr. Howard touched his cap and went out.

In another minute the motion of the brig changed, as she ceased to labor up against the heavy seas, and began to fall off to her helm before the gale. Then she dashed along so smoothly that it seemed to the people in the cabin as if she had gained calm water all of a sudden, and Bunt said:

"She's a daisy-cutter when she gets down to her work, captain. The Yankee will not have such an easy task to catch the Reindeer, if he wants it."

They waited a little, and the captain was about to send up to the officer of the deck again, when that individual himself came down to report that the "chase had hauled her wind again, and was coming down after the brig as if she meant to close at last!"

As soon as Lord John heard that, he jumped up with an oath, and ran on deck to see for himself.

Seizing the night-glass, he swept the horizon astern, and saw the faint outline of the strange ship, still at about the same distance as before, coming down after the brig.

"Call the men to quarters," he said, in a tone that showed he thought the time had come at last. "We will give this gentleman a chance to show what he's made of."

The rattle of the drum had hardly been heard, when the men came tumbling up the hatchways, and soon stood at their guns in silence, when the signal midshipman, who had been watching the stranger through the glass, according to his duty, came up to the captain, and pulled his sleeve confidentially to say:

"Please, sir, the chase is shortening sail."

The captain seized the glass himself, and saw through it that the topgallantsails of the strange ship were fluttering in the gale, as she took them in, and that she was at the same distance as before, not having altered her position a particle. It seemed strange to him, what could be the meaning of the maneuver, but, as he watched it, he suddenly made up his mind, and called out:

"Hands by the clew-lines! All hands shorten sail! Topgallant clew-lines! Clew up and furl. Lay out there, lively, you sail-trimmers! Are you all asleep there?"

The effect on the brig of reducing her canvas was to reduce her speed in the same proportion, and the captain, watching the stranger through the glass, saw that her outline was becoming more distinct every moment.

Then, as he watched, he saw the topsails of the other vessel begin to shake, and very soon they came in, when she maintained the same distance as before.

"That settles it," he muttered to himself. "She can beat me on any tack, but she don't want to catch me or she would come up. I'll try what carrying sail will do."

He called out the orders:

"Topgallant halyards and sheets! Cast loose and set the topgallantsails! Royal halyards and sheets! Give her all she can stand to-night, boys. I'll find out whether that fellow means to play hide-and-seek with us, all night, or not."

The brig was soon covered with canvas again, when her progress through the water became so much more rapid, that the outlines of the stranger became dim and uncertain through the glass, and the captain thought that he was at last leaving her, when he was surprised to see her set her topgallantsails again and come on so fast that she was soon once more quite plain.

This result achieved, however, the same exasperating course was followed as before. The stranger refused to come alongside, though it was evident that she could whenever she wanted. Her topgallantsails were taken in again, and she kept her distance in the same way as before, hanging on the quarter of the brig like a ghost.

In fact, there was so much that was mysterious in her behavior, that the men of the Reindeer, superstitious like all sailors, began to whisper to each other, as they stood at quarters, that it "could be no mortal ship." Stories of the Flying Dutchman, and all sorts of legends of the same class went the rounds, and the captain himself could not help a certain thrill of annoyance as he saw the way in which this strange apparition played with his vessel.

He would have gone below if she had given up the chase; if she had come alongside he would have known what to do; but when she kept at that exasperating distance, he did not know what to do, except to hold on his course toward the coast of Ireland again, in the hope that he might entice the stranger to her doom, as she was evidently trying to entice him, in the other direction.

After half the night had passed in this way, the coasts of Ireland, with the light-houses, began to appear before them, and compelled the captain of the Reindeer to be very cautious, for he knew that the coast, to be visible in the moonlight, must be dangerously near.

He hauled his wind, therefore, and threw his maintopsail to the mast, as if he had made up his mind to wait for the stranger to come down. It was about twelve o'clock when he did this, and the stranger did the same, as they could see in the moonlight, and remained waiting for the morning.

The captain went below to take a little rest, leaving orders to call him if any change took place in the night, and slept soundly till a sudden lurch sent him out of his cot, and rolled him on the floor, when he realized that a squall had struck the brig, and that he was wanted on deck.

Hastily scrambling out of the cabin, which was inclined to the horizon at an angle of nearly forty-five degrees, he got up the companionway, and found the brig, as he had expected, on her beam-ends, with the gale howling through her rigging like a pack of wolves after a quarry; the sea a mass of foam; the sailors of the watch on deck, huddling together by the weather side of the brig, holding on to anything they could find, and too much demoralized by the sudden coming of the squall to do anything.

One glance, and the captain saw that the brig was settling down in the water, and that she would go over if something were not done to relieve the pressure of the wind.

She had had her topsails set, when the squall struck her, and they were swelled out, as hard as boards, pressing the brig over, every minute deeper and deeper.

The heavens were as black as ink, and the only gleam of light that came from the angry water was of that ghastly, livid hue that makes the darkness more visible.

"Volunteers to go aloft, and cut away the topsails!" shrieked the captain angrily, as he saw the danger, and that the men were demoralized.

Then, as not a man stirred, he yelled:

"Follow me, then!"

So saying, he made a dash at the rigging, and was followed by a number of men, who, up to that time, had been too much terrified to do anything but hug the rigging, and look at the fate of the brig, which they could do nothing to avert.

The captain sprang into the weather rigging, and managed to get up, as the brig lay over. He was followed by at least fifty men, who passed him, and were so much ashamed of their cowardice, that they seized him by main force

and carried him down to the deck, while their comrades went at the work he had called for.

It needed but a very few cuts of the sharp sheath-knives that every sailor carries, under the tremendous pressure of the wind, to cut loose the maintopsail, that was the most dangerous of all in the position in which the brig was, at the time.

That once gone, the brig righted, under the pressure of the foretopsail alone, and slowly paid off, her hull rising to a level as she turned round.

Then, with a wild plunge and bound, she started off, as if on a race, straight toward the Irish coast, where the rocks were within three miles, as sharp and rugged as in any part of the world.

In the confusion and hurry, all thought of the stranger was forgotten, for it was a problem whether, with all the skill and resource that Manners had shown, he could bring his vessel out of the danger in which she had fallen, through the carelessness of the officer of the watch. She had been caught napping on a lee-shore.

For a good half-hour the fate of the Reindeer hung on a thread, and she was driven so close to the rocks that she had to let go two anchors, within three cable-lengths of the shore, when the squall abated, and she was able to see that the dawn had come at last, and that the horizon was void of any trace of the strange ship, that had drawn them so near to the brink of death.

When at last they got up the anchors, and stood out to sea, the captain of the Reindeer said to Mr. Bunt:

"It was all a trick, I believe. That Yankee must have known that the squall was coming, before we did, and got out in time. I will never be caught off a lee-shore again."

But the brig was safe, and the cruise had fairly begun. They had seen the Yankee, and were ready to swear that the brig could fight her, if not catch her.

On the whole, the result of the mysterious night-affair had not lessened the courage of Lord John Manners, or his confidence that he could dispose of the strange ship, should he ever be able to get her alongside the Reindeer, fair and square.

In this frame of mind, he set off to the southwest again, to hunt for her.

CHAPTER XVI.

WANTED, AN INTERPRETER.

THE lugger Faugh-a-Ballagh was at sea once more—this time in the finest of weather, with a clear sky overhead, and a gentle breeze that made her show off her best points of sailing—when Tim Bodkin, who was at the wheel as usual, said to the captain of the fishing-smack:

"And what in the devil does the bloody-minded Sassenach want of us to-day at all, that he's comin' down this way?"

Mat Blake looked up to see what his mate meant, and found a large man-of-war brig coming down on the lugger, as if she intended to speak her.

The Faugh-a-Ballagh had come out this time on a genuine fishing trip, as was witnessed by the long mackerel-seine heaped in the waist. Perhaps that was the reason all her men were so wide awake, it being notorious that mackerel are hard to catch, and that it requires sharp eyes to see the first evidence of a shoal, before it heaves fully in sight.

She had been standing "off and on" all the morning, about ten or fifteen miles out from the mouth of the bay of Galway, when the brig was seen coming toward her, and Tim uttered his ill-tempered malediction on the strange vessel.

Matthew Blake, on the other hand, looked worried and anxious about the vicinity of the war-vessel, for she was coming his way, and he had seen enough of the proceedings of English men-of-war, in the matter of fishing-boats, when the ship wanted hands, to fear that she might be coming down on him to press all his crew, and leave the boat to get to shore with himself alone, as had happened to others before him.

It was clearly no use to try and run from the brig, because she had the weather-gage, was coming down under a cloud of sail, and almost within gun-shot, before the alarm had been given by Tim.

Matthew contented himself with cursing Tim roundly for not letting him see the brig in time, so that the lugger might have stood in to shore, without attracting notice, and added:

"There is only one thing to do now, boys, and don't ye forget it. Every mother's son of ye's Oirish to the backbone, and ye don't spake a word of English. D'ye mind that now?"

The idea was by no means unreasonable, for the Galway fishermen, even now, are prone to speak nothing but a dialect of Irish, that no one understands, outside of the fishing town.

Therefore the lugger kept on her course, with an apparent unconsciousness of offense that was belied by the beating of Mat's heart, as he saw the man-of-war come nearer and nearer, and knew that she could want nothing good of him.

The lucky appearance of a shoal of mackerel, made the best of excuses for their presence, and

the crew of the Faugh-a-Ballagh got out the boat, and began to shoot the seine with an ardor and skill that they had never shown before. They hoped that the men-of-war's-men, if they saw them at work, would be disposed to spare them, for very pity.

Captain Mat took the command of the boat, to get time to think, leaving word with Tim to pretend ignorance of English, at all hazards; but being resolved to confess to a small smattering thereof himself, in case an officer came aboard the lugger.

The boat went on, at the allotted task, and the men began to get interested in the success of the cast, so much so, that they had almost forgotten the presence of the man-of-war that was coming up to pay them a visit, till she hove up to windward of the lugger and dropped a boat into the water.

Tim Bodkin, placidly steering the lugger, keeping her to windward of the seine, and occasionally luffing up into the wind so as to check the way of the boat, anon gathering speed again and standing on for awhile, was keenly alive, all the time, to the fact that the brig was coming closer and closer, till she hove to, within a few cable-lengths of the lugger, and sent a boat toward her, with an armed crew.

A smart and stern-looking officer, with his sword on, four marines, with their muskets between their knees, the sailors rowing, with cutlasses girded to their sides; such was the ominous aspect of the boat that approached the Faugh-a-Ballagh.

The smart officer was Mr. Howard, second lieutenant of the Reindeer, and he climbed aboard the lugger without a word to Tim, till he had come close to that worthy, Tim maintaining a stolid silence all the time, till Howard clapped him on the shoulder, and said briskly:

"Well, my man, and what luck have you to-day?"

Tim stared at him with an aspect of stupidity that no one can assume so easily and completely as a keen-witted Irish peasant, when he wishes to avoid questioning.

Seeming to recognize the fact that his interlocutor was a man of distinction, from his dress, he answered him in Irish, to the effect that he was glad to "see the noble gentleman and hoped he was well."

It had been Tim's first intention to call the visitor names in Irish, with an aspect of great civility! but a moment's thought made him more cautious; for he did not know but there might be a man or men among the crew of the boat that might understand Irish, in which case he would be found out.

His prudence was justified by the lieutenant, who in an ill-humored way, said, as if to himself:

"Confound these Irish savages! they never understand Christian languages. There ought to be a law to forbid the lingo being talked at all."

Mr. Howard was not aware that such a law had been passed, over and over again, among the many acts of tyranny that mark the history of unhappy Ireland, and that the signal of its passage had always been the signal for a fresh impulse in the study of the Irish tongue.

He turned to the crew of his boat, and called:

"Is there any of you men that understands Irish? If there is, come here, and interpret for me."

One of the men rose and touched his hat with the remark:

"I do, your honor."

"Come here then, and don't stand there in the boat," said the officer, ill-temperedly. "Ask this fellow whether he has seen any sign of a strange man-of-war around the bay, since the last week."

The sailor, a pressed man, from the south of Ireland, whence he had been taken from a fishing-boat, a long time before, came up.

He was a good-looking fellow enough, and had the resolute expression of a man who would do anything he was ordered. His name was Terence O'Donohue.

He came close to Tim, and said to him in Irish:

"It is a long time since the Gaul has had an opportunity to fool the Sassenach. He wants me to ask you a question. Tell me what you like, and I will repeat it."

Tim heard and understood in a moment, and his reply was:

"Tell him that we have but just come out fishing, and that we have seen nothing at all."

Tim listened attentively to the reply, as it was translated, and Terence rendered it correctly.

Howard seemed to be annoyed by the answer, for he said:

"Tell him that she has been hanging about the bay a good deal of late, and that the fishermen must have seen her. Describe the ship to him, and ask whether he is sure that he has not seen her."

Terence turned to Tim and said to him, in the same uncouth tongue that masked his meaning from the officer:

"The Sassenach wants news of the enemy. If you have any lies to tell that you want told well, I will repeat them for you."

With this hint for a basis, Tim Bodkin set to work to invent a long string of yarns about the strange ship, of which the lieutenant was inquiring, the gist of which was that he had seen nothing of her, but that he thought she must have gone out to sea and been lost in the storm that had prevailed the night before.

He listened to his faithful interpreter repeating these figments of Tim's brain, and noticed that he varied them slightly, but kept pretty closely to their general tenor.

When Terence had finished, the officer seemed to be nonplused for a moment and at a loss what to do. Then he suddenly made up his mind, and got back into his boat, which was rowed away from the lugger to the boat that was now engaged in drawing the seine.

As the man-of-war boat came closer to the fisherman, Mat Blake told his men in a whisper:

"Not a word of English now. Let me do the talking for yez all."

Then the boat came up, and Howard asked:

"Any of you men understand English?"

Mat turned his face with an engaging smile to the king's officer, to reply:

"And it's the best of English that I spake, captain, yer honor; but the rest of the boys is that ignorant that they won't larn it for love nor money."

"Well, then," asked the officer, "have you seen a ship-rigged corvette in the offing lately?"

Mat stared stupidly.

"A what, sur?"

"A ship-rigged corvette. A sloop-of-war. Not as big as a frigate, but carrying guns, I mean."

"Like the wan beyant, sur?"

"No, you fool; that's a *brig*. I mean a *ship*—three masts. Don't you know the difference between a ship and a brig?"

Mat looked more stupid than Tim had before him.

"Deed and I don't, sur. Is it a ship yer honor is lookin' after?"

"Yes; didn't you hear me?"

"Yes, yer honor."

"Well, have you seen any such craft here, within the last few days? Last night she was here, and we saw her; but she disappeared. Have you seen anything of her?"

Mat scratched his head.

"A ship, sur, is it? And sure there's a power of ships comin' round all the time, sur."

"This one has a black hull, with no ports painted outside. She carries a tremendous square main-course, and very big sails for her size. Has a look as if she was over-sparked."

Mat looked wise.

"I know the ship yer honor manes."

Howard's face brightened, as he asked:

"Where did you see her, then?"

Mat seemed to be considering. At last he said:

"A week ago last Tuesday, sur, it was, that me and the boys was comin' back from the fishin' wid a power of fish in the well, and we was overhauled by a big ship, like the wan ye spake of. She come on us all suddint-like, and we wasn't thinkin' of her at all, at all."

"Where?" asked the lieutenant, eagerly.

Mat appeared to be considering again, and it was some time before he answered:

"And I ain't what they call a navigator, sur, so I can't say. We was driv' out to say by a squall, and when we got our reckonin' again we had to run into Cork, bad luck to us. 'Twas while we was out at say, in the middle of the Atlantic, that she came on us and spoke us. We was all tired wid the work, and glad to see any wan as would give us a lift, so we made bould to ax the gentleman, that was the captain, where we was, and he gave us the coorse to steer to git to land again."

The officer groaned in spirit at the stupidity of the fisherman, but managed to control himself so far as to ask:

"What coorse did he give you?"

"Northwest, sur."

Howard stared incredulously.

"Northwest! You mean northeast, don't you?"

"No, sur; I mane northwest."

"Did you steer it?"

"I did that, sur; and why w'u'dn't I, av the gentleman was good enough to give it to me?"

"And when did you get to land?"

"Two days after, sur."

"At what place?"

"Deed, and that's what I don't know, sur," was the innocent answer, as Mat scratched his head. "They *did* say that it were Cornwall; but the haythens c'u'dn't spake English as well as I c'u'd meself, and we got away as soon as we c'u'd, yer honor. But the captain of the ship was a rale gentleman, after all."

"Why, what did he do to you?"

"He didn't kape us talking widout givin' us a sup of the cratur's sir, and that's more than I can say for every gentleman that comes to talk wid us. And he bought some of our fish before it spoiled, yer honor; for there's nothing that tastes better on a gentleman's table than good fresh mackerel. Look at this, yer honor. Ain't they the beauties?"

Mat indicated, with an admiring wave of the hand, the silver scales of the mackerel, that now began to be seen through the meshes of the net, and the officer, seeing in the fisherman only a common fellow of the coast, with a phenomenal capacity to lose his way at sea, said to him, hurriedly:

"I've no time to waste on this. We are on a cruise. Here, what's your name, here is a shilling for your trouble. Give way, boys."

And away went the boat, while Mat, with a wink at the rest of the boys, put the shilling in his pocket, and observed, dryly:

"And did he get the best of me, boys? Did he, now?"

Then the fishermen went at their work with renewed energy, as they found they had a heavy haul.

Meantime the boat went back to the brig, and Mr. Howard reported that he could get no satisfaction out of the fishermen, who did not know anything about the ship that had cost the Reindeer so much trouble the night before.

Lord John cross-questioned him as to what they had said, and when he heard the story that Mat had made up, about the ship that had found the lugger at sea, and given her the direction, he exclaimed:

"Then she must have been driven into the chops of the channel. There is no other way in which a northwest course would bring the lugger to land in Cornwall."

He seemed to be very thoughtful at the news, and finally gave the order to put the ship's head to the west again, and stand out to sea.

The Faugh-a-Ballagh was looked on as not worth further trouble, and left behind.

As soon as the brig was fairly out of distance in the offing, Mat Blake said to the boys, who were all in his confidence:

"Boys, The Blake is coming back again, and ye mind what I say. That felly don't come down here, huntin' for him, for nothin'. Keep a bright lookout for him."

They did so, all that day, while they continued on their cruise; for the first shoal of mackerel had not proven enough to fill their well, and they were desirous of having a good haul before they went into Galway.

They even stood out to sea for several hours, till the land was a faint cloud on the horizon; but had no view of the ship for which they were looking.

As the sun set, they saw the brig that had searched them, coming back to the coast again, and Mat said:

"She's going to search us, av we don't get out of this."

CHAPTER XVII.

ON BOARD THE WASP.

LIEUTENANT OLIVER WINTHROP, with his face set in a frown of great anxiety, was talking to his particular friend and next in command, Lieutenant Robert Marion, both of the American navy, and belonging to the sloop-of-war Wasp.

The two friends were pacing the quarter-deck, talking to each other in low tones, and, from the expression of their faces, not able to control their feelings altogether.

Marion was the easiest in mind of the two, probably because he had the least responsibility. Winthrop was in command of the ship, in the absence of the captain; and that person had been away from the ship for over a week, since he had gone on board the yacht of the smuggler, in the Irish channel.

"Here we are, six weeks out and no prizes yet," said Winthrop, in a tone of great ill-temper. "I declare I don't see what the skipper can be thinking of, to leave the ship in this manner. Where can he have gone to, and when is he coming back? I shall not take the responsibility of avoiding that brig any more, if she comes after us again."

"I wouldn't either," said Marion, bluntly. "You are not expected to wait on the Skipper all the time, when he has perhaps been taken prisoner by the Johnny Bulls. The rules of the service require you to fight when you can, and they don't require you to wait for the Skipper forever."

"That is not the worst of it," replied Winthrop. "The fact is, I am working under orders, and I am liable to be court-martialed if I do not obey them strictly. He left them sealed, to be opened as soon as I required advice in a difficult position."

"And what were they?" asked Marion, eagerly. "It alters the case if he has left specific orders, for, to tell you the truth, I began—"

And here the young officer stopped, as if he were afraid he had said too much.

"You were afraid that the Skipper was not all right in his head," interposed Winthrop with the air of a man who is gratified to find another who agrees with him. "Well, to tell the truth, I am not sure you may not be right. I have had suspicions that way myself. He has certainly taken a very queer course. What do you think the orders were, when I came to open them?"

"To sail up the Thames and storm Windsor Castle!" asked Marion, lightly.

Winthrop frowned.

"It is no joking matter, I can assure you. He does not want to do anything quite so mad as that; but I must say that he is not far from it. He wants us, in case he is gone more than a week, to set our course for the Channel, and run straight up it as far as the Straits of Dover, till we see him coming to meet us."

Marion stared.

"Straits of Dover, indeed! Why we should be stopped and signaled by a dozen men-of-war before we got to Plymouth. The whole Channel is swarming with cruisers."

"I know that; but, nevertheless, those are the orders, and we have got to obey them, unless we are prepared to stand a trial for disobedience, in case he ever comes back."

Marion laughed. He had all the reckless courage of the young naval officer of America, in a war where the chances were so much against the ships of his country that it was a wonder they had ever ventured to sea at all. He rather liked the idea of going to the straits of Dover, and running the gantlet of the British fleet, if the ship only got out somehow. It was this feeling that made him say to his friend, as Winthrop appeared gloomy at the prospect:

"Well, Win, there is no getting anything without risk, and if those are the orders, we have no option but to follow them; have we?"

Winthrop looked him in the face, and inquired in wonder:

"Do you mean that you are actually in favor of following the orders and standing up the Channel, after the captain, on a regular wild-goose chase?"

"I actually am, Win. It is not our responsibility. If we get taken, we shall have our orders to show, I suppose."

Winthrop instinctively put his hand to his breast, as he answered:

"Ay, ay. I took good care of that. If I get killed, remember that they are here, in my breast pocket, and you are not bound to follow them; they are addressed to me, not to you."

"We won't talk about getting killed, till there is no chance of coming out alive, Win. I am in favor of trying to obey the orders of the skipper, if we can. There is not a soul in sight now, and that brig will not amount to much, if she tries to stop us. We can blow her out of the water."

Winthrop cast a glance around the horizon, as he replied:

"If it was not for the news that we heard from that fisherman yesterday, I should not be so much afraid of the result; but they say that the French war is over, and if so, the chances are that the whole Channel is closed to us."

"So much the better chance have we of passing unnoticed," said Marion, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps that was what the skipper meant by giving us the order. The men-of-war will not be on the watch for the French privateers, and they will not dream that we would dare to sail up the Channel, to their very doors. We are now, as I take it, not very far from the chops of the Channel—"

"We are in the very midst of them," interrupted Winthrop. "The Lizard lies to our northwest and the Channel Islands are due east. If we hold on the course we are now going, we shall be in sight of Portsmouth before night; for the ship is going a good eight knots an hour, and the best wind we can have is on our quarter."

Marion cast a glance around the ship as his superior spoke, and saw that he spoke the truth.

A brisk breeze from the west was driving the Wasp straight up the English Channel, and the waves around her were just high enough to cause a slight roll to the ship, as she dashed along, without impeding her progress in the least.

The Wasp was covered with canvas, from her trucks down, and was going at a great pace through the water, though the wind was not enough to put her to her very best speed. The snowy decks; the rows of well-kept cannon; the sails, as white as the drifted snow; the neat dress of the sailors; all presented an appearance of beauty and order that was particularly pleasing.

Winthrop looked round him and sighed as he said to Marion:

"She is a beauty; is not she, Bob? What a pity she should be going on her last cruise!"

"Last cruise be hanged," cried Marion. "We are going to beard the British lion in his den, and don't you run away with any idea, Ol! Win, that we are going on any last cruise. Do you want to give us all the blues, and kill us before our time? We are going to run the gantlet of the whole British fleet, and to get out of it as safely as Paul Jones did, not so many years ago."

In those days Paul Jones had not become so mythical as to-day, and his name aroused the memories of famous deeds in a much greater degree than it does to-day. Winthrop smiled more cheerfully as he said:

"After all, it is not my responsibility. If we get taken, the skipper will have to take the blame, and not I."

"Of course not. I don't believe that he would think of any such thing, Win. He is a fighter,

if ever there was one, and if we get into a trap, through running after him, he will take care we do not be blamed for assuming the responsibility. Hallo, there is a sail already that looks like a man-of-war."

A white sail on the lee bow attracted this speech, and Winthrop saw it at the same time, with feelings of mingled fear and surprise. He thought that, if it were a ship-of-war, he would be relieved of the necessity of going any further to find an enemy, and he also thought that it might be a small vessel, which might become a prize.

Sending Marion up to the mast-head to inspect the stranger through the glass, and report as soon as he should be sure of its identity, the young officer paced the deck below with a nervous anxiety that he did not care to conceal.

It was a nervous position for any man to be, at his time of life;—for the officers of the American navy, when it was still in its infancy, were often like Winthrop, young men, who had never had much experience in war, till they were put into it, in the midst of difficulties. Winthrop had been a midshipman in the Constitution, when she made her first cruise in the war, and had been promoted, only three months before the Wasp went to sea, while his friend Marion was still his junior in rank, low as that was.

He waited till he saw his friend coming down the rigging again, and could hardly control his impatience till the other had spoken.

"Well, what is it?" he asked, anxiously. "Have you made her out?"

Marion looked puzzled, as he said doubtfully:

"If I was not afraid of making a big mistake I should say that the sail we see was the very yacht we met in the Irish Channel, when the skipper made his departure so suddenly."

Winthrop was so much overjoyed at the idea that he lost his dignity and came near hugging his friend; but Marion held him off as he said:

"Don't be in too much of a hurry. I may be mistaken after all. It is certainly a small vessel, and looks like a yacht; but it may be another altogether."

"But what was the rig? could you see?"

"A cutter, but there are nothing but cutters in this part of the world, you know, and now that the French war is over, the English yachts may be coming out for fun. We can take this one, if it does not turn out to be the one we are after."

The Wasp kept on her course after the strange sail, and in half an hour more she could be seen from the deck of the corvette.

A cutter-rigged yacht she was, and looked very like the little craft that the ship had encountered in the Irish Channel, when the captain had made such a sudden departure.

She seemed to be coming toward them, and to have no fears of the ship, till they were about two miles apart, when the smaller vessel turned round and put for the shore, with a suddenness that showed her commander to be alarmed at the appearance of the ship.

The Wasp had the weather-gage, and held her course for some time; but could not come up with the strange cutter, which sailed like a witch. There was not enough wind to give the ship the advantage her size would have afforded had there been more sea on, and the chase became exciting, as the Wasp crowded on all the canvas she could spread to the wind and followed the cutter. As they went on, the coasts of England became visible, and with them a number of vessels of all sizes that had hitherto been hidden by the curvature of the earth. One could see that all were hugging the coast closely, as if they were afraid of capture. For some time the ship did not gain on the cutter to any appreciable extent, but after the chase had lasted for near an hour, and the shores of England were plainly visible, the ship began to close, as if some accident had happened to the cutter. Winthrop saw that she was running for the protection of one of the numerous martello towers that then studded the coasts of the Channel on either side; and he put out all the canvas he could stretch, with the result that, in half an hour more, he had the cutter under his lee, and had begun to clear away a gun to fire a shot at her. It was a bold thing to do in the Channel, with the knowledge that there might be fifty ships-of-war within chasing distance; but there was no resource.

It was necessary to find out what the cutter was made of, and in another minute the report of the gun echoed over the water, and the shot was seen skipping past the cutter, which immediately hove to, as if her commander had had enough of the affair.

Then the ship came up and hove to to windward, at about a cable length, when Marion took the boat and went aboard her.

As he drew nearer he saw that it was the same cutter that they had met in the Irish Channel, and was at a loss to understand why she should have run away in the manner she had done.

He was received on her deck by the very man that had received his commander when he had gone aboard her, a week before, and the first words that the young lieutenant spoke were:

"Well, and why the deuce have you run away from us, my friend? Don't you know the Wasp?"

Bampton looked at him as if he had never seen him before as he answered him with the utmost coolness:

"I never saw you before, sir; but I suppose that you belong to the Yankee pirate, Wasp; that, we were informed, was lurking about the chops of the Channel. Well, sir, you have taken me; but it will do you no good. Your ship will be taken in three days, if you do not put out to sea and go home."

Marion replied:

"I don't trouble my head much about that, sir. Have you seen our captain? That is what I brought you to for. He went away with you."

"Indeed?" was Bampton's composed reply. "I think that you must be mad, sir. To my knowledge, I have never seen your ship before. Who is your captain?"

Marion, puzzled at the stout denial, rapped out angrily:

"What are you trying to do?—to make a fool of me? Our captain went away in your cutter, and we want him again. Where is he? If you don't tell me at once, I shall have to send you in as a prisoner."

Bampton's only answer was:

"I expected to be taken, when you fired at me; but I don't want to be insulted. I am a prisoner, and I want to be treated as such."

"Oh, very well," said Marion, in a pet. "You shall get all the prisoner's treatment that you want, I assure you."

Then he turned to the boat's crew that he had brought with him, all armed, and told them to take possession of the yacht, which was done in a trice; the men of the cutter being driven below in rough style, and the control of the little vessel being turned over to the Americans. Then Marion said to Bampton:

"Now get into that boat, and I will take you to the ship."

Bampton, displaying no uneasiness at the harsh tone of the young officer, obeyed his order, and they were rowed to the ship.

When they struck the deck, Marion reported to Winthrop that he had brought the master of the yacht to him, the latter "denying any knowledge of the captain, who had gone with him."

Winthrop, looking at the other steadily, observed that he was smiling, in a way that indicated amusement, and asked him, with some asperity, "what he was laughing about?"

Bampton turned his head to the group of officers that were gathered round him, and said:

"If you are anxious to know, I will tell you as soon as we are alone, and have no listeners."

Winthrop motioned the officers to fall back, and then said:

"Now, sir, what does this mean?"

"It means," said Bampton, with a smile, "that you are the greenest pair of Yankee officers whom I ever saw. Do you suppose that I was going to admit before the whole crew, whom I have to confront in my own country, that I knew anything of you? It was necessary that you should take the yacht, if I hoped to get back to England again without being liable to be hung for treason. Your captain is on board that cutter, but he must be got out without any one knowing that I have had a hand in it."

Winthrop, a little mortified, asked:

"And how shall we know that he is on board?"

"By seeing him come aboard this ship, of course. He is in disguise. He has done what few men would have dared to do, and has got a great deal of information in consequence. He will come with the rest, if you muster the crew of the yacht. And I may as well say that, the sooner you do it, the better it will be for your own safety. There are a good many ships waiting for you in the Channel."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE WASP.

THAT night the moon did not rise till about ten o'clock, and her light was much diminished; for she was in her third quarter.

In the obscurity that reigned before she was fully risen, the Wasp, and her small tender, as the yacht had become, sailed out of the dangerous position that they had occupied in the Channel, in plain sight of the shores of England, and took their course toward the coast of France. When they had arrived within a few miles of the island of Jersey, there was a good deal of passing to and fro between the ship and the cutter, after which the ship took her departure to the west, while the yacht sailed away to the north. As soon as she had got to a distance where the shot could not possibly hurt the yacht, the ship began to fire her long twelve at the cutter, sending the shots skipping over the waves in the moonlight, but not in any case hitting her.

Hardly a dozen shots had been fired, when the report of another and much heavier gun

came booming over the water, and Winthrop who had the deck, exclaimed to his midshipman:

"Go and give my compliments to the captain and say to him that we have roused the enemy at last."

The boy, a fair-haired youngster of German extraction, named Geisinger, ran down-stairs to the cabin, all in a hurry of joyful excitement, and found the captain of the Wasp, who had returned in such a mysterious manner, sitting at his table, by the light of a lamp, studying a chart, so intently that he did not hear the boy till the latter coughed. Then he turned round sharply and asked:

"Well, sir, what is it?"

The midshipman was overawed; for he was at no time very confident in the presence of his commander; and the fierce tone of the latter abashed him.

"There is a British ship in sight, and firing back at us," he explained. "Mr. Winthrop has the deck, and he sent me to tell you, sir."

Blakeley seemed as if he had not heard him for a moment, and then he answered more kindly:

"That is right. You have done all right. Tell Mr. Winthrop to give up the chase of the cutter, as soon as he sees the enemy plainly. The ruse has succeeded."

Max Geisinger touched his cap, and turned to leave the cabin, when the captain added:

"Tell Mr. Winthrop to come down as soon as he has put the ship on her course again."

Then he turned to his chart, and studied it as intently as before.

He had before him the coast of France, with the chops of the Channel in the middle of the map, and was studying the distance to various points, with the dividers.

"There is no port so safe as L'Orient," he muttered. "It is easy of access and exit. The French war is over now, and the blockaders are not out. It is true that the French are no longer the enemies of England, but they will do all they can to help us, for the sake of old times, and a Bourbon now sits on the throne once more. Then the India fleet will be coming home, with no idea of danger, now that the war is over with France, and still less idea that a single ship would dare to beard the lion in his den. That is the best chance that we have, and if I do not make the name of Blakeley as famous as that of Blake, it shall not be for the want of trying."

Here Mr. Winthrop came into the cabin, looking much more placid and at ease with himself than he had before the arrival of the captain of the Wasp. He had a smile on his face as he entered, and said to the captain, in a gay tone:

"You don't know what a load you have taken off my mind, captain, by coming as you did. I had begun to think that you must have certainly perished, and was cudgeling my brains to imagine what we should do without you."

Blakeley smiled faintly, as he answered:

"I ought to be very much obliged to you for the estimation in which you hold me. The anxiety is only transferred. Do you think I look as if I was perfectly happy?"

Winthrop glanced at his commander, in the faint light of the swinging lantern, and saw that his face was very pale and had the marks of recent sorrow on it, in the furrows of the brow.

"I hope," he said, timidly, "that you have had nothing to pain you, while you were gone, sir."

Blakeley shrugged his shoulders.

"It is but a small affair," he said. "You, Winthrop, who were born in the country where your ancestors have lived for centuries, and where there is no doubt of the place where your duty belongs; have no idea of the straits that befall other men, who are exiles, and yet love the country of their birth. It is no use to talk to you about it. You know I was not born in America, though I think I may say I have done my duty as well as any one of your natives who fought in this war."

"Nobody doubts it, sir," exclaimed Winthrop, with generous enthusiasm. "No prouder name is found in the navy than yours."

Blakeley shrugged his shoulders again, in that listless way, full of sadness, that the lieutenant had noticed before.

"Thank you. You are kind to say it; but I know that we who are but adopted citizens, have to prove our fidelity by means that you are not expected to give. I must signalize this cruise by doing something that no one has done yet. That is why I have been ashore in England and have chased this yacht into the channel, for the purpose of drawing some of their cruisers after me. I heard a gun just now. Whence did it come?"

"From up the Channel, sir, and it looked to me as if it was opposite Plymouth. It came from a ship that carries long twenty-fours."

"I thought so. It must be one of the new frigates. Do you think she can catch us to-night, Winthrop?"

"Not the slightest chance, sir. While you were away I tried the heels of the sloop against everything I could find, and I am confident that

there is not a ship in the Channel that can come near us."

"Did you get chased by any of them while I was away?"

"By nothing but that brig, that came after us, off Galway Bay. We kept out of her way easily enough and tested her at every point. We can give her our topsails any time. If it had not been for a squall, that came up in the night, and forced us to run to sea, I think we should have had to fight her, in sight of the shore."

"You would have been wrong, Winthrop. There is only one thing to do when we are taking prizes. We must keep as far at sea as we can, and out of hearing of English ships. They are swarming in the Channel, and all around it. They have orders to sail for the sound of the guns, whenever they hear them. This frigate that is coming after us will set the rest on a wrong trail for several days, and we have got to make the most of their mistake. As soon as we are clear of the chops of the Channel, stand out to the southwest."

Winthrop, thinking that the conference was over, was rising to retire from the cabin, when his superior said:

"By the by, Winthrop, what do the men say about my absence, as far as you have heard?"

Winthrop hesitated for a moment, till he had considered what to answer without offending his commander.

"I don't know of course, any more than you do, sir, what the men say; for I do not mingle with them. But I have sounded the boatswain, and the petty officers, who hear them talking, and they think that the men are very glad to hear you have come back alive. They were beginning to get superstitious about your sudden disappearance, and to imagine all sorts of things."

"As what, for example?"

"Well, sir, you must not be offended for I am only repeating, at your own request, the gossip of the fore-castle; but there were men who said that you were an Irishman, and that it was likely that you might sell the ship to the English, to buy your pardon from the British Government."

Blakeley did not seem to be disturbed or angry at the news, for he only said quietly:

"A most ingenious idea. But do you think they are ready to fight, if they see a chance?"

"Of that there is no doubt, sir. They are only too anxious to do it, anyhow. They are sick and tired of this dodging about the chops of the Channel, doing nothing but play hide and seek."

"They shall have no more of it, Winthrop. The time has past for that. To-morrow opens a new era for this ship, and the veriest fighters on board shall have all the fighting they want. By the by, I have something to tell you. You do not know what I went ashore for."

"Not entirely, sir."

"It was partly for the purpose of obtaining information that could be obtained in no other way, and partly to see what was left of my family. From this time, Winthrop, I have no ambition but to do all the harm to England that I can, and to humble her pride by every means. Will you join me in doing that?"

"You know I will, captain."

"Shake hands on it, then. The first ship we have to take is the Reindeer."

Winthrop grasped the hand of his commander, as he said:

"The Reindeer shall be taken."

"Then we have to go to L'Orient, and I shall want you to meet a lady there, who will come aboard the ship, and be with us henceforth."

Winthrop stared at his captain.

"A lady, sir?"

"My sister, Winthrop. I should have brought her away from England with me, but the danger was too great. She will meet us in France, if we do not get sunk before we reach there. You are not unwilling to do this for me: are you, Winthrop?"

Winthrop colored slightly, and smiled as he said:

"Certainly not, sir, if you are willing to trust the young lady in my hands."

"I am, Winthrop. You know that it is a hard thing to convert a woman, when she has a notion, and my sister has been brought up in England, with the notion that England is the only country in the world. You will have to be careful about offending her prejudices; and I have no patience myself to do that. When we get to L'Orient, I shall send you in, alone, to fetch her."

"I shall be proud of the commission, sir."

And there was a light in the eyes of the young man that showed that he was telling the truth.

Then the captain signified, by bending over his map again, that he wished to be left alone, and the lieutenant went quietly out of the room, and passed the rest of his watch on deck, gazing at the stars, and wondering what sort of a person the captain's sister might be, of whom he had never heard before that day.

Oliver Winthrop was already as near being in love as a man could be, who was thinking of a woman he had never seen in his life.

CHAPTER XIX.

A RARE PRIZE.

LORD JOHN MANNERS was pacing the deck of the Reindeer in his usual lonely fashion. The brig was off the southwest coast of Ireland, standing out to the middle of the ocean, with a view to intercept the strange ship that had been reported so often as hanging around the entrance to the English Channel, on the hunt for merchantmen, coming home from India.

The Reindeer had been on that search for several days, but had seen nothing of the ship she was looking for, since it had eluded her on the coast of Galway.

The brig, after passing the morning in sailing slowly along, frequently changing her course, whenever a sail hove in sight, to examine whether it might not be the long-sought-for Wasp, had hove to for the purpose of taking the sun at mid-day, and ascertaining the latitude and longitude.

When the altitudes had been worked out, the first lieutenant came to Lord John to say:

"I make her out to be in latitude 49, north, sir, and I'm blowed—I mean I beg pardon, but I think we are in longitude 8.15, west."

"The deuce we are! I had no idea we had gone so far west, Bunt. You must set her head to the east again. Stand for the coast of France. We are as likely to find her there, as anywhere."

"Quite as likely, and a little more so, sir. In fact, I think that, if we can only run into her there, we can have a chance of getting a square fight out of her."

The course of the brig was changed to the east, and she kept it steadily till the sun began to send his slanting rays across the waves, and give token that he had an intention of going to rest for the night.

It was just at this moment that the lookout announced a small yacht dead ahead; and the captain, who had not hitherto seen it, on account of the glare of the sun, found that the yacht was close aboard the brig, and in evident distress. There had been heavy weather the night before, and it was probable that she had been out in it and suffered thereby. She had lost her long topmast, and the slender jibboom that had swelled out so many huge sails, as the little clipper cleft the waves; while her single mast had been sprung so badly that she was unable to carry anything more than a rag of sail, and so had proved easy to overhaul.

As the brig came up to her, the captain noticed that she had no signal of distress flying, and that she seemed to be anxious to avoid the vicinity of the man-of-war; for she kept her course steadily to the eastward, and made no effort to approach the larger vessel, for the purpose of asking help, as would naturally have been expected.

Perhaps this was the reason that Lord John, who was naturally suspicious, altered his course so as to go close to the cutter, and hailed her as he passed:

"Yacht aboy! D'ye want any help?"

"No, thank you," was the answer from the deck, as a big man, in a watch-coat and sou'wester, turned his head that way, and instantly averted it. "We are going into L'Orient, and shall be able to get all we want there."

The captain looked at the big man rather more suspiciously than before. The weather was fine, and there was no necessity of any one being muffled up like that, in such pleasant breezes.

He turned to his second lieutenant, and said quickly:

"Mr. Howard, I don't like the looks of that fellow. I am inclined to think he must be a smuggler. Take a boat and go aboard him. Find out what is the reason that man wants to hide his face."

Howard, by no means loth for the job, for he liked change, took the jolly-boat and rowed to the yacht, which was unable to escape, and therefore took the visit quietly.

When he got on deck, he found the big man in the watch-coat, standing by the binnacle, and to him he addressed several questions, which the other answered so evasively, that the officer at last said:

"Well, my friend, I shall have to send you on board the brig and search the cutter myself."

The proposition seemed to be a very unwelcome one to the other, for he at once changed his manner, and said to Howard, in a tone of confidence that showed he had been playing a part:

"Look here, lieutenant, can't I have a moment's talk to you, where these fellows can't hear what is said?"

Howard, not knowing what to make of him, went to one side of the deck, and asked him:

"Well, what is it now?"

The big man whispered to the officer, in the same confidential way:

"Now, look here, lieutenant, you're a man who lives on your pay, and what you can get besides, and I am a man who lives by what he can make. I don't mind telling you that, if this cutter is stopped, no one will make anything out of it, while, at the same time I am ready

to give a hundred pounds for the privilege of getting off to the French coast, without being searched. Now it is easy enough for you to go back, and tell your skipper that it is all right, in the cutter and then, all you will have to do will be to put this little wad of paper into your pocket, and spend it when you get to shore."

Howard listened to him as if he had been in a trance. It was something so new to the haughty, aristocratic young man, to have a person openly attempt to bribe him to neglect his duty, that, for a minute he was inclined to laugh at the other.

Then he got angry and rapped out:

"You infernal, insolent, smuggling scoundrel, how dare you talk to me, in that manner? Do you think his majesty's officers are to be bought off by your paltry hundred-pound notes?"

The big man at once retorted:

"If that isn't enough, say what is, and you shall have it. I'll give five hundred pounds, if you like. Come, lieutenant, that's a fair offer. I've hundred pounds, and no questions asked."

Howard's only answer was to turn round to his coxswain, and beckon him over, saying:

"Take this man to the brig, Johnson, and let the captain talk to him. He is a smuggler, and we shall keep the cutter."

The big man was asked his name, and sullenly replied that it was nobody's business, and that they could get it out of his men, if they wanted. There were only four or five men on the cutter, at the time, and the man at the helm was stone deaf, as it turned out, when they came to questioning him. The rest of the crew showed such astonishing stupidity, when asked the commonest questions, that the suspicions of Howard were strongly excited, and he ended in searching the cutter from deck to the bottom of her hold, without finding anything to reward his curiosity in the way of contraband goods. In fact the cutter seemed to be empty of everything but the provisions and stores that showed she might have been going on a cruise of three months or so.

At last Howard went into the cabin, and there he found the state-rooms, on one side of the vessel, locked, which was the first thing that gave him an inkling what to do. Calling for an ax, he split the doors open, one after the other, and found, in the berths, under mattresses and blankets, all sorts of valuable goods, that packed into small space, and conclusively showed that the cutter was a smuggler, trying to escape.

Full of eager excitement at his discovery, he went from door to door, smashing in every one that was locked, and at last came to the only door that had not yet been searched. It opened into the largest and best cabin in the yacht, being the nearest amidships and the least exposed to the motion, a thing of some importance in vessels of that class.

He was about to break open this last door, when it was suddenly opened from the inside, and the astonished lieutenant was confronted, to his intense amazement, by a young girl of extreme beauty, who came out, as pale as death, and managed to say, in tones of great fear and distress:

"Oh, sir, for God's sake do not kill me! I am not anybody who has committed a crime, I assure you."

The change from the excitement of smashing in doors and finding treasures to that of meeting a young lady who was obviously frightened to death, was so great, that Howard dropped the ax in shame, and flushed scarlet with embarrassment, as he stammered:

"Who are you, and how did you come here?"

"I am a passenger to L'Orient," was the reply, in the same tone of terror, as if the speaker expected every minute to be killed. "I have done no harm, indeed, sir, and I hope you will not hurt my uncle for shielding me."

"Your uncle; who is he?" asked Howard, looking round, and not connecting the big man in the sou'wester with the fragile and beautiful creature before him.

"He was on deck when your ship came up, and he told me to lock myself into the cabin," said the young lady, as she colored before the ardent gaze of the lieutenant. "He said that the sailors on the men-of-war were always a bad lot, and would be sure to insult me. Are they, sir? I am so much afraid of sailors."

Howard thought, as she spoke, that he had never seen or heard such a sweet creature in his life.

He wished, at the moment, that he had not broken down so many doors, and that he had not frightened the girl so much. To allay her fears, he said, with his sweetest smile:

"My dear young lady, if I had had the slightest idea that you were here, I should never have done what I have done. As an officer of his majesty's navy, I have to perform my duty; but I do not desire to do it harshly."

But all his sweet words did not seem to reassure the girl, who kept looking round the cabin, at the scene of destruction that was visible, and had the expression of one who was frightened out of her wits.

To relieve her evident anxiety and terror for herself, the lieutenant sent the men out of the

cabin who were engaged in the work of destruction, and then said to the lady again:

"Now, madam, I hope that you will not be so much frightened at what has been done. May I ask your name? I have to tell the captain, when I go back to the Reindeer."

The name of the brig seemed to produce a singular effect on the girl, for she repeated it, with an inquiring accent:

"The Reindeer! Surely that is not the name of the vessel to which you belong, sir?"

"The same, I assure you."

"And the captain—his name is Manners, is it not?" she pursued, in the same tone of interest, looking at Howard in a way that made him wish he could have her beside him all the time. "Is it Lord John Manners that commands her?"

"The same, miss—ah, I beg your pardon, what name shall I say?" said Howard, in his sweetest tones.

The young lady, who had been so timid a moment before, drew herself up like a queen, and replied:

"Tell Lord John Manners, sir, that the daughter of The Blake of Castle Blake is here, and that he can slay her, as he slew her father, as soon as he wishes."

Howard was so much surprised at the change of tone, that he could only stammer, unmeaningly:

"Tell him?—Pardon me—but—I don't quite understand. The—ah—Blake of Castle Blake—I—what is that, please?"

The girl turned round to the state-room, and re-entered it with a grand sweep, saying as she went:

"Tell him what I said, and he will understand."

Then she shut the door in his face, with a boldness that contrasted with her previous timidity, and Howard, not knowing exactly what to do, but shamed out of any further violence in the yacht, went on deck again, and saw the brig coming down on the yacht, as if she was impatient at waiting so long.

The lieutenant let the brig come alongside, when he hailed her with the cry:

"Brig aboy! Is the captain there?"

"What is it?" asked the clear voice of Lord John, as he looked over the side. "This fellow that you sent aboard is as obstinate as a mule, Howard. Have you found anything?"

"Yes, sir," responded his subordinate, with some confusion. "There is a lady aboard, and, if you please, sir, I think that she will not come aboard the brig, unless you come for her."

Lord John seemed to be surprised, as he said:

"Me come aboard! What are you talking about, sir? Are you going mad? Send her aboard the brig instantly, if there is any trouble. I can't afford to go to that yacht."

Howard touched his hat, as he answered:

"Very good, sir. I'll tell the lady."

Then he went down to the cabin, and found the door shut again. He knocked at it and said, in the most polite way he could:

"Miss Blake, if you please, the captain of the brig would like to see you."

The door was instantly opened, and the girl came out, saying as proudly as before:

"I am ready, sir. Lead me to the captain."

Howard offered his arm, and took the young lady to the deck, where the boat of the Reindeer lay by the gangway, waiting for its load. She made no objection to going into the boat, and stepped in as if she was used to the sea. Then she was rowed to the man-of-war, and soon after stood on the deck of the Reindeer, surrounded by a crowd of curious officers, who stared at her with ill-concealed curiosity and admiration, as she stood there, pretending not to see anybody or anything; but betraying, by the flush of her cheek, the consciousness of being stared at.

Lord John on his part was so much overcome by the sight of the girl, who was of extraordinary beauty, that he forgot his politeness for a minute, and was only recalled by the hesitating cough of Howard, who said formally:

"This is the lady, sir. The daughter of The Blake of Castle Blake, she says."

Had some one struck the captain in the face, he could not have looked more thunderstruck and astonished by the words of the lieutenant, innocent as they were. He turned red and then pale, and said hurriedly to the girl:

"Be kind enough to walk into my cabin. I am sorry to have to stop the yacht, but my duty has to be done."

The young lady faced him, with a boldness that surprised Howard, who had seen how timid she naturally was, and replied clearly:

"Are you Lord John Manners, the son of the Duke of Rutland?"

"I am," said the captain, with a slight flush on his face.

The girl smiled on him with a strange expression, as she answered:

"Then you are the son of the man who murdered my father, and his son has sworn to avenge him on you. I am Rose Blake. You are the son of a traitor. Do as you will with me; for my death will be avenged soon."

CHAPTER XX.

THE TWO PRISONERS.

If there is nothing else in the pride of race that prevails in the countries of Europe where the nobility still lingers, it is apt to produce a good deal more fact than is commonly found in more republican countries. The officers of the Reindeer perceived in a moment that some family quarrel was on the carpet, and they managed to slip off from the vicinity of the captain as soon as the girl had uttered her singular speech before the whole deck—in fact, they shrank away as if the pair had been stricken with the plague.

Even Howard, who thought that he had a right to stay, was so much appalled by the open accusation, that he also shrank away from the group, and hurried away on an imaginary errand.

Thus it happened that Lord John was left all alone with the beautiful stranger, who continued to gaze at him with a look as if she would like to kill him with her eyes, while she repeated, in no less earnest tones, though lower:

"Yes, sir; you know it, though I did not until a few days ago. Your father was a traitor, and he had my father hung, and made my brother an outcast—and all that you might be Lord John, and have the good things of this world. But he is coming—he said so, and he never lies, for he is The Blake of Castle Blake, and they always keep their words. Your race is nearly run, so you had better kill me now while you have the opportunity."

While she was talking Lord John was looking at her closely, but he was hardly able to make out what she was. The first impression he had was that the girl was a maniac, who had got to sea somehow, but there was a look in her blue eyes that forbid that assumption. She was excited and angry, but by no means mad. There was, moreover, too much method in her talk to make it an undoubted case of madness.

He had heard this sort of thing recently from a man who was very sane indeed.

He affected to think that she was out of her mind, however, and answered her soothingly:

"There, there, my poor girl! don't excite yourself, or it will make you ill. What is it that you want of me? To go home? You shall do so at once. I had intended to keep the yacht, but now I shall let it go. It would be too bad to deprive you of a support."

The girl looked him over from head to foot, as she answered:

"And you are the Manners that is called Handsome Jack? I have heard of you before."

The words piqued Handsome Jack, who was rather proud of his person, as well he might be, and he retorted:

"You have the advantage of me; you know me, but I don't know you."

The girl laughed scornfully.

"You know me well enough. I am the daughter of The Blake of Castle Blake, and my brother is the captain of the American ship you are looking for. That is who I am, and you can do your worst now. It will belike the race of traitors, from which you come, to kill me."

Lord John was puzzled for a minute what to do with this strange character, and then he took his resolution.

"Look here," he said to the girl, with a face that seemed to be divided between anger and scorn; "if you are the daughter of a gentleman, as you say, you must know that you are behaving in a way that is more like a woman who is no better than she should be. If you like to walk into my cabin, and tell me in plain language what it is you want, I will tell you whether I can do it for you."

The cool and scornful way in which he spoke and the tone he adopted had their effect on the girl, who flushed deeply at the rebuke, and said, more temperately:

"Your men have taken my uncle prisoner, and pretend that he has got to go to prison. He must be released, or he will be able to tell the world all about the treason of your father, who is now called a duke."

Lord John nodded.

"He is a prisoner, as you say, and he deserves it. He is a smuggler, taken in the act, and he deserves no mercy. But I do not want to be harsh to him, for your sake. If you ask for his liberty, you shall have the boon you ask."

Rose looked at the captain with the air of an insulted princess, as she retorted:

"If you will wait till I ask you for a boon, you will wait a long time. You are a coward, and the man who wars on a woman is called a coward by all the world."

Lord John looked round and saw that the officers could not help hearing a great part of what passed, though they were intently occupied in looking over the side of the brig into the sea, watching the shoals of fish that were visible.

He knew that they were listening, and that they would have all sorts of comments behind his back, when he had forgotten all about the incident of the day. He determined to get rid of this troublesome personage, and called out:

"Mr. Howard, you have brought me a lady, who has taken leave of her proper senses. I

should not be justified in letting her stay on board of the brig, without some restraint. You will take her down-stairs, and put her with the man whom she says is her uncle, in close confinement. You know the place. If not, the steward will show you the way. Good-evening, madam."

With the slightest and most formal bow to the lady, he turned off to the other side of the deck, and Howard, to whom the duty was of the most unwelcome sort on account of the ridicule to which it would expose him from his brother officers, who had already dubbed him "lady's maid," for his services so far, went over to Rose, and said to her in the politest tone:

"The orders are to put you in confinement, with your uncle. Will you come with me?"

The young lady turned to follow him, with a grace and readiness in charming contrast with her behavior to the captain, and accompanied the young lieutenant with a smile of thanks.

He led her down-stairs to the captain's cabin, where he knew, from a whispered conversation, that the other prisoner was confined, and found the big man, that he had seen on the deck of the yacht, pacing up and down the cabin, unconfined, with a sentry at the door, for his only trammel.

Howard took the lady inside, and she flew to the big man, who took her in his arms in a way that Howard thought very aggravating to him personally, while he said to her, in a tone of great relief:

"If we must be taken, Rose, we shall be taken together."

Then he turned on Howard, and said to him with a stare of angry contempt:

"I don't envy you your office, sir, to be a lady's jailer. It is a fine thing for his majesty's officers that they have Lord John for a captain."

Howard was so angry at the taunt, that he retorted at once:

"It is very lucky for you, sir, that you have that young lady with you, or you might find a stopper clapped on your jaw, in a manner you might not like so well. I have nothing to do with you, and I will trouble you not to address me in future."

Howard thought he had the best of this passage of arms, so he went out of the cabin and found the deck a scene of confusion.

The men were hauling at the braces, and more were running up the rigging to spread sails that were not up at the time.

The cause of this unusual bustle was soon discernible in the presence of a sail on the southwestern horizon, toward which the brig was being headed at her best speed, while the yacht, that had delayed them so long, was left behind on the face of the sea, with a crew from the brig to take care of her.

To the young officer, who had been below, there was something in the appearance of the strange sail that was very familiar. Distant though it was, he had seen it before, and felt sure of it.

The singular part of the whole thing was the fact that the stranger had gotten to within less than seven miles when he was descried by the lookout, who had been so busy with the yacht and the events connected therewith that he had neglected to watch for the rest of the horizon.

The strange sail was a man-of-war beyond a doubt, from the way in which his spars were covered with sails.

No merchantman in those days, with the weak crews that were carried, could have afforded to carry such a press of canvas, in the variable winds that then prevailed and the squalls that were constantly arising.

"By Heaven!" muttered Howard, "it looks very like that Yankee we chased, the other day."

That Lord John thought the same, was made manifest by the orders he gave, to get the men to quarters and open the magazine.

The little yacht was left behind in the gloaming, and the Reindeer set her course toward the setting sun, just as the stranger came fully into sight in the midst of the bright disk of the orb of day, standing out as if she were made of fire herself.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE YANKEE CRUISER.

THE setting of the sun was followed by darkness, and the wind set in hard and gusty; while the heavens were covered with clouds, in the midst of which came on one of those storms, of which the eastern Atlantic gives so many examples in the early summer and at the turning of the solstices.

In the darkness and confusion of the squall, the Reindeer drove on over the waters; and when the moon rose, the stranger, which had been so clearly visible at sunset, was nowhere to be seen.

Hunting for a strange sail at night, when the heavens are covered with clouds, is hard work, and the Reindeer had no better chance than any other vessel.

The men were sent to their hammocks, and

the brig was kept under short canvas all the night, a sharp lookout at the knight-heads and aloft, watching the horizon for the sail that had vanished so suddenly.

The captain of the brig went below at midnight, and found that the two prisoners had been confined in one of the state-rooms that opened off the main-cabin, the girl having refused supper and the man having told the steward, who came to call them, that he and his niece would need nothing to eat "till the Americans took the brig."

Lord John was too anxious about the whereabouts of the ship that had so suddenly disappeared to pay much attention to the news; but when the morning came he was surprised, when he went out into the cabin before ascending on deck, to find that the male prisoner had come out of the state-room in which he had been confined, and was looking out of the stern windows of the Reindeer with an eagerness of gaze that showed he saw something interesting.

Naturally the first place to which Lord John's eyes turned, as he came on deck, was the spot on which the man below had been looking.

It was to leeward and astern of the brig, the last place that the lookout would inspect at ordinary times, danger being always expected from ahead and to windward.

But it was there, on the lee quarter of the Reindeer, in the first flush of dawn, on the 28th of June, 1814, that the sails of the ship that had eluded the brig so long, were seen shining, in the red light of the morning.

She was close-hauled, under short canvas, having evidently passed the night in the same cautious fashion as the Reindeer, to wait for what the morning might bring forth.

From the position in which she lay, it was doubtful to Manners whether her crew saw the Reindeer yet; for the strange ship had her head away from the English vessel, and beyond her were several sails that had come on the scene during the darkness of night. One of these, from its dark-brown color, was obviously a French fishing-boat, that had been driven out to sea, the night before, but the other was a ship, whose size and square sails gave her the appearance of a frigate or a large Indiaman.

As soon as Manners saw he had the advantage of the stranger, from the accidents of the night (for the weather-gage had become his, without a struggle, and he had it in his power to chase the strange ship to the coast of France if he pleased), he ordered the sails set to close, and stood after the stranger.

The men came tumbling up on deck, in the bright light of the early summer sun, and the deck of the Reindeer soon presented a very animated and picturesque appearance.

The vessel was headed to the eastward, so that the sunlight shone across the decks, and dazzled the eyes of the men as they looked forward, toward the stranger.

The last thing they had seen of her, the night before, she had been in the midst of the setting sun, and the first thing they saw of her in the morning, was in the beams of the rising sun.

Meanwhile the stranger had spread all her canvas, as soon as the sun had fairly risen, and was standing off after the distant Indiaman, as if desirous to cultivate a closer acquaintance with her.

That the strange ship was not a frigate, but something more vulnerable, was made plain from the fact that, as soon as the American made sail to close, she spread all the canvas she could to escape, and made away to the eastward.

"She is an Indiaman, beyond a doubt, and the Yankee is after her," said the captain to Bunt, as he watched this maneuver. "We shall have all we can do to stop him from closing before we get up."

Bunt looked at the Yankee ship for some time before he answered this remark.

"He don't see us, my lord, and he's too anxious to catch that Indiaman, to notice us," he said. "As soon as the day is fairly up, he will turn for us, or I am much mistaken."

"One thing I am determined on," said the captain, in his most obstinate way; "that he does not get away from us to-day, as he has before. We have the weather-gage, and he cannot escape, unless I give him a point, and I don't feel much inclined that way, to-day."

The morning wore on for another hour, and by the time eight bells were struck, and the men at their breakfasts, the stranger had given up the pursuit of the Indiaman and had turned her head toward the brig. She was making stretches to windward, trying hard to regain the weather-gage, that had been lost in the darkness of the night, but without avail, so far as the immediate result was concerned. The Reindeer held too much of an advantage to be easily given up, and as soon as Lord John saw his enemy was willing to close he began to act as cautiously as if he knew the character of the contest he was about to provoke.

He kept stretching to windward, and getting further to sea all the time, with a view of testing how much superiority the enemy had over him in sailing. That the Wasp was a swift ship, and could do wonders on a wind, he knew already; but he was resolved not to fight till he

could do so with all the advantages in his own favor.

The morning was worn away in maneuvering to gain position, and it was noon before the two vessels had closed to within three miles, when the English captain was surprised to see the prisoners of the yacht, who had come up unseen, and were standing on the quarter-deck looking longingly at the distant ship.

It was the first time Lord John had had a good opportunity to look at the girl who had been taken so strangely the night before, and he was struck by the fact of her beauty. The sight of it caused him a slight thrill of pity that one so beautiful should be exposed to the chances of a sea-fight, in the horrors of which she was about to be plunged, and he approached her to say:

"Young lady, the best thing you can do is to go aboard your own yacht, if she has not disappeared, and get out of this brig. We shall go into action in a very short time, and this will be no place for you."

The girl made no answer; but her male protector said for her:

"You are very kind, sir; but where is the yacht? She seems to have disappeared. I fear we shall have to witness the taking of this brig by the Yankee yonder; and to tell the truth we shall not be sorry for that. We are both Irish, and you know how much cause we have to love the English."

Manners smiled as the other spoke, and said in answer:

"Well, sir, you are frank, and I will be equally frank. I don't intend to be taken, I can assure you, and that there may be no mistake about my intentions, you will see the Yankee laid aboard as soon as we get into the proper distance. I have heard that the captain of that ship is a traitor on whose head a price is laid in England; and if he is caught we shall give him a short shrift, you may be sure."

The girl, who had been listening to the conversation, here gave a low, bitter laugh, and said to the captain in an undertone:

"But suppose he gets the best of you, how then, my lord? He will be justified in hanging you at the yard-arm for the treason of which your father was guilty. Will he not?"

Lord John shrugged his shoulders and said to Bampton:

"If you want your child, niece, or whatever she is, to be safe to-day, you had better take her below, if the yacht does not heave in sight. I suppose that she has been taken off by the prizemaster to keep her out of danger of capture by that Yankee. He was right, for there is no use in running risks for the sake of traitors."

The prisoner looked off to the eastward, and saw there, not far from the Wasp, a little white dot on the sea, which he indicated.

"There is the yacht, and she will be retaken by the corvette if we do not save her," he said. "If you wish to protect your prize crew, you had better stand toward them and fight the enemy, my lord, or they will be apt to experience the tender mercies of a Yankee prison."

Lord John looked at the little white dot, and saw that it was a long way off; so he answered:

"The prize crew can take care of themselves, and the enemy can take care of himself. Take the lady below into the run of the brig. I shall go into action within a quarter of an hour now, sir."

Bampton turned to Rose, and asked her: "Will you go below, or would you like to stay and see the Yankee take this brig?"

Lord John interrupted him angrily.

"Go below, sir, at once, and remember that, whatever the name and nationality of this lady, you, at least, are an English subject, and liable to be hung at the yard-arm. Go, sir, unless you want the master-at-arms to hurry your footsteps."

Bampton bowed with a great deal of politeness, and turned to go as he had been ordered, with the remark, as a Parthian arrow:

"We won't be long there; this brig will be a Yankee prize in half an hour."

Then he went below with the girl, and Lord John, whose temper was strangely ruffled by the seemingly wanton insolence of the two prisoners he had treated with such rare politeness and consideration, ordered them into the run, a sentry over them, with orders to the man not to let them come on deck, till he had special directions from the captain himself.

Then he turned to his duties, and the brig was put with her head toward the stranger. The moment the head-sheets were let go, the distance between the two ships became less and less with marvelous rapidity, and it was plain that they would meet, in a very few minutes after they had once set their courses to each other.

CHAPTER XXII. CLOSE ACTION.

THERE was now no doubt in the minds of the crew of the Reindeer that the ship they had so often met, and which had so often eluded them, was at last coming to fight them, and the news made them proportionately excited.

A little after noon, the captain began to sig-

nal, with a view of finding out if the strange ship would try to answer him, and gaining time by distracting her attention. The signals were answered, but the reply proved totally unintelligible to the Englishman.

At one o'clock the two were at a distance of a mile, at which, had they been frigates with long guns, the action would have naturally commenced. As it was, both being armed with nothing but carronades, and a single long-twelve—hardly a serious piece in an affair of this sort—were content to close with each other, before they pretended to open fire.

The Wasp had the best of the sailing, but the Reindeer, having the weather-gage, kept it, and held aloof till the stranger had tacked again and again, trying to eat her way up to windward.

At two in the afternoon the ships were less than half a mile apart, and Lord John Manners called his crew aft to the heel of the mainmast, where he made them a short speech to this effect:

"Men, you are British sailors, and the ship that comes yonder is a Yankee, one of those rebels and apostate English fellows, who are the disgrace of the name. Don't think that the Yankees won't fight, for they will; but they won't fight like our men, when their blood is fully up. I am going to lay that fellow aboard, and try to carry him by boarding, for I know he has heavier metal than we, and we shall get the worst of it, if we fight him with the guns, at long bowls or anything of the sort. All I want of you is to go aboard that Yankee, when I lead you, and to try what British sailors can do, to keep the name of Nelson in honor, here in the very seas where he made himself immortal. If there is a man who is afraid to board, and peril his life, let him step out now, and I will let him go below, and take care of the hold. The men who are not afraid will give three cheers."

The answer that came from the throats of the sailors was of the kind that the captain had expected. They cheered him to the echo, and proved so eager to close with the enemy that he gave the order:

"Let go the head sheets and stand toward the enemy. Lay her aboard, quarter-master."

Hitherto the Reindeer had been close-hauled, to preserve the weather-gage, and the enemy had been following her in the same way, on the same track, trying to eat her way to the windward. As Lord John gave his last orders the brig put her head toward the ship, and went rushing down the wind, with the velocity of an angry tiger, while, the Wasp coming to meet her, the two vessels were within a cable-length of each other before the men had time to get over their first excitement.

The Reindeer found the Wasp in the act of wearing, as she got by her, and hung on her quarter, where she used her shifting carronade on the fore-castle with good effect, firing it into the Wasp with precision, at less than a hundred yards.

Every shot struck and the splinters flew from the American ship, while Lord John, with a shout of triumph, called out to his men:

"That's it, boys; give it to the cowardly Yankees!"

The American ship had got into some difficulty with her yards and had missed stays, at the moment when he called this out, so that a slight temporary advantage had been gained by the Reindeer.

Then the wind caught the sails of the Wasp, and she shot ahead and luffed round the bows of the English brig, when both delivered their broadsides, at less than half musket-shot distance.

For a few moments after that, the smoke was so dense, and the crash of timbers and planking so confusing that it was difficult to see what was being done; but the captain of the English brig knew, from the sounds of yelling and groaning, that his vessel was getting the worst of the exchange of broadsides, as well she might when the one vessel threw twenty-four pound shot, and the other thirty-twos. The effect of the carronades moreover, at such close quarters was much more severe and terrifying than that of long guns. The carronades carried heavier shot than came from the guns of most frigates at that time, and they smashed things, as they sent their missiles, while the shots of the long guns, from their superior velocity, were apt to go through the enemy at one blow.

Lord John, in the first glance that he caught of the way everything was going, as the wind blew the smoke away for a moment, saw that the deck of the Reindeer was already a mass of wreck, where the bulwarks had been smashed to bits, and the feet of the two masts eaten away by the shots, so that they were both tottering, though the action had not lasted longer than ten minutes. He also saw that the bowsprit of the Reindeer was hanging over the quarter of the Wasp, while the American ship had backed her maintopsail, and was lying motionless on the water, so as to fire more steadily at her mark. The brig, on the other hand, had just filled her headsails by an accidental turn of the helm, and was moving down on the enemy.

The brave young officer saw the only chance

that he had. His upper works were being knocked to pieces so fast that it was only a question of a few minutes when his masts would go by the board, and the Reindeer be left a helpless wreck on the water, when he must strike to his foe.

He rushed forward to the waist of the brig, where the men could hear him, and roared at the full stretch of his voice:

"Boarders away!!!"

The men heard the cry, so familiar, at that day, in small vessels, where the expedient of boarding, which was rare in frigates, was more often used, and they came running to the side of the captain, with the more readiness that the battery of the brig was all on deck, and the cry had not far to go to reach them.

In another moment the bowsprit of the brig passed over the side of the Wasp, and the desperate young nobleman rushed to the knight-heads and sprung on the heel of the bowsprit, to board the enemy. The water was smooth at the time, and the wind so light there was no difficulty in the operation. The Wasp had a low quarter, and the Reindeer was a high built brig, so that the English vessel, while much the smaller of the two, had the advantage in height, and her men were able to jump down on the decks of the Wasp from a slight elevation, headed by Lord John Manners, who had drawn his sword and was fighting in advance of all, with a desperate ferocity that at first threatened to carry all before it.

He was followed by his men, with a steadiness that was beyond praise; for the British sailor, whatever his faults, will always fight.

For some time the battle raged so furiously on the decks of the Wasp that the firing of the guns ceased entirely, and the only sounds audible were the sharp reports of pistols and clashing of cutlasses, with the shouts and curses of the combatants, who fought with the desperate and savage vindictiveness that characterizes the sea duel of two enraged crews.

In the confusion, it was not possible for any individuals to be recognized; but the brilliant uniform of the English captain, who was a great deal of a dandy in his way, and had put on his full dress that day, made him a marked figure in the midst of the battle.

Shot after shot was fired at him, as he cut down man after man in the melee, but it seemed he bore a charmed life, and his party had progressed from the extreme stern of the Wasp, where they had entered, to the heel of the mizzenmast, where they were checked, at last, by a party of men, headed by a tall officer who came at Lord John as if he had a personal spite against him, shouting:

"Manners, Manners, I am The Blake!"

The only reply of the captain was to rush at the tall officer and engage with him, in a strife so desperate and savage, the sailors on either side stood still involuntarily to look on; their own fierce passions being shamed by the manner of the two men who fought there. The Englishman was a little the heavier of the two, and, as they were fighting with the same cutlasses that the men used the advantage of strength was by no means to be despised. A fight with cutlasses, on the deck of a ship, where both combatants are close to each other, and in earnest, is a very different thing to a duel with broadswords or rapiers on shore, where both have their seconds, and are put at a proper distance and watched, in case they should get too much excited.

These two men were so anxious to hurt each other, that they forgot all caution, and struck like maniacs, hardly deigning to parry the blows that came as thick as hailstones.

Before they had exchanged three passes, the strength of the Englishman had driven the other back from the position he had occupied, and as he retreated, Lord John shouted:

"Forward, boys! The Irish traitor is giving in. Drive them into the sea! Into the sea!"

The sound of that shout seemed to nerve the other leader.

Gathering his sword in both hands, he made such a succession of sweeping blows at the Englishman, disdaining to parry, that he in turn drove back the other to the taffrail of the Wasp, where the sudden retreat caused a panic among the men, and the cry arose:

"Back! they are coming aboard!"

The cry was sufficient to cause a momentary panic, and the English sailors rushed back to their own vessel, leaving behind them a long trail of dead and wounded.

The captain, struggling and cursing at the repulse, was carried along with the rest, and separated from his antagonist, who had not uttered a cry all the time they were engaged.

Then, when Manners looked back to the Wasp, he saw the enemy, gathered on the stern, ready to repel the boarders at the very threshold of the ship.

He waved his sword again, and led on his men, but the energy of the first onset was not to be equalled. The son of a duke could not inspire any more courage than they had the first time, and the assault was repulsed with the more ease that the captain of the Yankee ship was at the head of the boarders of

the Wasp and had slowed round a carronade, that swept the deck of the Reindeer with fatal effect at the very moment Manners started to board.

The awful volley of grape-shot, coming in their faces and tearing a lane through the midst of them, at the very moment of the onset, made a temporary pause, and the captain, waving his sword, called in vain on the men to follow, till he sprang on the taffrail of the Wasp, all alone, and shouted, over the din:

"Leave your captain, if you dare, cowards!"

Then they followed, with a rush, and the fight was renewed on the decks of the Wasp, with a ferocity that lasted for nearly five minutes of hard struggling, in which the cold steel replaced the ammunition, which was almost exhausted for the time.

Manners again led the storming party, and managed to drive the Americans back long enough to gain a foothold of the decks of the Wasp when the American commander, for the first time, began to shout:

"Remember the Guerriere! Down with the British!"

Then arose, from the fore-castle of the American ship, a yell, shrill and menacing beyond the sound of the British cheer.

The men of the Wasp made a rush, and by main strength drove the Englishmen, cursing and struggling, but overborne by the weight of numbers, and jammed so close together that they had no room to use weapons, back to the stern of the ship, at which moment a wave came and parted the two vessels for a moment, just as the rush was going over the stern of the Wasp.

Then came a cry of horror, as the figure of the British captain was seen on the top of the Wasp's taffrail, staggering, for a minute, and then, followed by a number of men, falling overboard between the two vessels, as the wave, that had parted them, sent them crashing together again. In that lurch the English lost the battle, for they lost their captain, whose personal example had alone kept them up against overwhelming odds, for the last three or four minutes.

Manners down, the rest was easy.

The American captain, seeing their evident consternation, boarded in his turn, and down came the English flag, in a minute afterward.

CHATER XXIII.

THE CONVOY.

THE captain of the Armada, British seventy-four-gun ship, was, as usual, guarding the weather side of the quarter-deck from the intrusion of anybody less important than his first lieutenant, who was allowed there for the sake of giving his reports and consulting with the captain at stated times; or when it suited the convenience of that august personage to call him up.

The Armada was a seventy-four of the latest construction, built in India of teak, which is the best ship timber in the world, and she carried forty two-pounders on her lower deck, which was a much heavier battery than Nelson's Victory had fought with at the battle of Trafalgar.

The Armada was a good ship, of her class, in heavy weather, and had run past several sloops on the way from India, having won the reputation of being one of the fastest ships in the British navy.

Her captain, Lord Augustus Paget, was another sprig of aristocracy, like Manners, being the brother of Lord Uxbridge, who was in the army, and well known as the favorite of the Duke of Wellington.

Lord Uxbridge was a dandy of the first water, and his brother was a navy dandy, who took more trouble than the army fop to get himself up in a style to attract the attention of the fair sex.

It may be asked where the fair sex were to come from, in the case of Lord Augustus, and the answer, at the time that the Armada was despatched in the offing, was that the ship was escort to a fleet of East Indiamen, in the days when Indiamen were always full of ladies: so that there was plenty of opportunity for the exercise of the fascinations of the captain.

The ship was sailing along under short canvas with the sea all round her, covered with the sails of her convoy, and the scene was one of great brightness and animation. The Indiamen of that date generally had their sails of the yellowish native grass cloth that takes so finely in pictures; and their tall, heavy hulls, with the stern galleries and rows of ports, gave them a majestic appearance that reminded the beholder of a fleet of line-of-battle ships, but for the straggling order in which they were scattered over the sea.

The Armada had to keep on the outskirts of the flock, hurrying up this one and that one, and firing occasional signal-guns to draw in some ship that had fallen astern, or was going ahead, out of the radius of fire within which alone there was safety if an enemy should chance to appear.

Lord Augustus was saying to his first lieutenant that he thought of taking his gig and visiting the Bombay, one of the handsomest ships of

the convoy and on which he had several friends, for the purpose of taking dinner with the captain, who had invited him a hundred times, when he was startled by the sound of guns at a great distance off, coming down the wind at intervals.

The boom of a gun was too well known in those days, when Europe had only just ended, for a few months, the greatest war that had convulsed her since the days of the great Frederick, and the captain began to snuff the air and say to his first lieutenant:

"Harwood, what the deuce can that be?"

"It sounds very like guns, my lord," was the tranquil reply.

Harwood was not by any means sorry to see the captain's little trip to the Indiaman spoiled. Harwood had, in fact, aspirations of his own in that direction, and he did not like the captain to take advantage of his superior rank, to go off in the gig, and leave his first lieutenant to do all the work for him.

The first lieutenant knew that, if the firing went on, his captain would have to stay on board the ship, to take care of the convoy.

So the two men listened, with different thoughts, to the firing.

Paget thought it a bore; Harwood thought it very lucky.

The cannonading went on with great rapidity for nearly half an hour, when it suddenly stopped, and the captain said, with an air of great relief:

"I imagine it does not amount to much. Some privateer had a brush with one of the sloops-of-war or brigs, that are running up and down the coast of France all the time, and it is over. Order my gig, Harwood."

Harwood turned, with the face of a man who has taken a glass of vinegar, to the midshipman on duty, and told him to "order the captain's gig."

The shrill pipe of the boatswain's whistle soon echoed through the ship, after which the hoarse cry of the boatswain and his mates for the crew of the gig brought that assemblage of smart and well-built sailors to the side, in their best clothes, for it had become a regular thing, during the voyage, for the captain to go out paying visits to the Indiamen, that had the pretty ladies on board.

The men of the gig were by no means loth to go: for they generally managed to get something on board the Indiaman that was honored by the visit of the magnate of the convoy. While the captain was on the quarter-deck making love to the ladies, Jack was in the waist, with his mates of the merchant service, spinning yarns or making love to the pretty Hindoo ayahs, come over as nurses to the children of Indian officers that form such a large part of the passengers on Indiamen.

Jack is not particular, when he finds a petticoat, what color of woman it shields, and there was probably as much genuine love-making in the waist of the Bombay, that day, when the captain had gone aboard her, as there was on the quarter-deck, where there was spread a huge awning, under which the ladies of the ship were gathered around the handsome captain of the convoying man-of-war, hanging on every word that fell from his lips, and making him a little more conceited every moment.

The lady that he had really come to see, this time, though he made a pretense of being a general lover, was a young and rather good-looking person of the name of Jane Stokes, who had the reputation of having "three hundred thousand pounds in the funds, at home," which had been accumulated by her parent and guardian, the late Sir John Stokes, when in the civil service in India, where he had feathered his nest pretty well.

Miss Stokes was inclined to look on the captain with favor, for she was keenly sensible of the fact that her father, who had only been knighted,* had left no title behind him, and had been a vulgar person with all his wealth.

To be a Lady Augustus Paget, with a possibility of being the Countess of Uxbridge some day, if the earl went off as there was a talk he might do any day, for he was a wild fellow, was one of those futures that filled the soul of Miss Stokes with joy, whenever she thought of it, which was very often.

When Captain Paget came aboard, she had a way of admiring him from afar, and casting sheep's-eyes at his boots, blushing furiously if detected; and the captain, nowise loth to be sure of his heiress whenever he chose to throw the handkerchief, was often pleased to cast tender looks her way, till it had got to be a well-understood thing, on board the Bombay, that, as soon as the fleet reached home, there would be a match, and the family of Paget would go up a notch in the peerage.

To be sure, on the Seringapatam, where also the captain often visited, there was another heiress, who had more money than even Jane Stokes, but then she had the disadvantage that

*The titles of knight and baronet in the English peerage are the same "Sir Blank Blank;" but the baronet's "Sir" descends to his eldest son at death, while the title of a knight is not hereditary, and is looked on with some contempt, on account of the class of people on whom it is conferred nowadays.

she was of the mixed blood that is looked down on in India, under the name "Eurasian," which was regarded as an insuperable obstacle to the match. The Anglo-Indian ladies held up their eyes and hands in horror, when the idea was broached that such a thing could possibly take place, and when it was suggested that the captain, not having lived in India, might not be disposed to indulge in the prejudices of the East, and that the fair Eurasian, Minnie Moore by name, was very beautiful, and had half a million in her own right, the ladies all said:

"That is no consequence at all. Look at her finger-nails. That tells the story. He might as well marry a full-blooded negro at once, and have done with it."

To help these ladies in their confidence, they had no means of knowing how many times the captain of the seventy-four went on board the Seringapatam as compared with the Bombay, and, when the gig was seen going the rounds of the fleet on a calm day, it was often hard to say which ship it stopped longest at. Moreover, there was a great laxity of discipline on board the Armada, on that cruise; for the captain knowing that the wars were over, except the American contest, which was looked on as a mere fleabite, compared with the vast conflict which had just been waged between the giants of Europe, had given leave to many of his officers to go out with the boats on calm days, and visit the Indiamen all round the fleet.

And as, in coming up the coast of Africa, there were always a good many calms, it had become the custom, in the Armada, to hold festival on each of them, and the amount of "heavy spooning," that was done by the officers of the navy, in the various ships in the convoy, was almost beyond belief.

At the very minute that captain Paget was making eyes at Miss Stokes and her three hundred thousand pounds in the Bombay, Mr. Harwood had taken the jolly-boat and gone off to the Seringapatam, which lay at half a mile away from the Armada, the last ship being left to the care of the second lieutenant, while the convoy, in the light winds that prevailed, was clustered together in the strangest mass of huddled confusion; the big Indiamen spreading all their sails, while the man-of-war had to brail up her courses to keep back with them, and avoid going out, ahead of the fleet.

Thus it happened, on that fine June afternoon, that no one particularly was on the lookout, and the shepherd of the flock was, as might be said, "asleep, while the sheep were scattered."

It was while this delicious afternoon was going on, and every one felt most secure, that Miss Stokes said to her admirer:

"What is that ship, Lord Augustus, over there, that looks as if she was coming to see us? Is it one of our own that has got out of the convoy?"

Captain Paget looked in the direction indicated by the young lady, and saw a ship, with her masts in the disorder that marks the merchant service, to the eye of the navy officer. Her yards were swung at all sorts of angles, and her sails were not hoisted to the taut neatness of a man-of-war.

There was only one thing about her that showed she was not of the fleet, being much smaller than the general run of the Indiamen.

She was heading straight for the center of the convoy, where the Bombay sailed along, while the Armada, which had to look after the whole of the fleet, was at least two miles off at the time, and hidden by the sails of her charges.

It was hard to say what was the cause of the sudden pallor that overspread the face of Captain Paget, as he looked at this ship, but all the ladies on the quarter-deck of the Bombay noticed it, and Miss Stokes asked hastily:

"Oh, dear, I hope it is not a pirate?"

The captain of the line-of-battle-ship was too much aghast at the prospect of the damage that might follow his carelessness to make any answer. He saw that the stranger was coming on in the midst of the convoy, and his practiced eye saw, beneath the apparent disorder of the rigging, that the ship coming was strong-handed.

She was too small for a merchant-ship going to India, and, had she been an ordinary trader, she would never have come into the middle of the convoy. He leaped to the conclusion at once, and with reason, that she was an enemy. Her course was the only ground on which he founded his supposition, and he did not like to let the ladies know how much alarmed he was.

He affected to treat the whole thing with levity, as he said:

"There are no more pirates now, Miss Stokes, and the stories of Kidd are all exploded. That fellow is only a trader, who has lost his reckoning and wants to get the latitude and longitude from us."

Then he rose up and added:

"But it reminds me that I ought to be at my post, and that I shall positively have to take leave of you all, and go back to the ship. That fellow may have to be stopped and searched. Captain Jones, will you oblige me with a word for a moment apart?"

The master of the Indiaman, who had seen in

common with the rest that something was wrong, took the captain of the line-of-battleship to one side, and Paget said to him, hurriedly:

"That fellow is a Yankee sloop-of-war, and we are going to have trouble with him, if I don't get back to the ship at once. I have arranged a signal for the recall of the ship. Fire three guns in a volley close together and then trust to luck for what will happen."

Captain Jones looked mystified at the order; but obeyed it promptly, and the ladies were soon surprised to see the sailors at work at some of the guns, carried by all Indiamen in the days of the Napoleonic wars, getting them into order to fire.

Of course the idea that there was going to be a noise frightened the ladies; but, as the captain explained that it was "only a signal" they concluded to wait, and, when the guns went off, all in a bunch, they only screamed a little, and concluded that it was "not so bad after all."

The three guns from the Bombay set the whole fleet into commotion, for they were almost instantly answered from the Armada.

CHAPTER XXIV. CUTTING OUT PRIZES.

THE tall sails of the majestic ship Armada were seen through the press of the Indiamen, towering over the smaller craft, as she came sweeping down to protect her convoy as soon as she had fired the answering gun.

The sound of that gun produced a sudden transformation in the ship that had first attracted the notice of the young lady on the deck of the Bombay.

As if at the touch of a magician's wand, the slovenly yards were swung straight and trim, and a slip of canvas, that had been trailing over her side, to imitate the clumsy lines of a Dutch trader, fell off, and revealed the sharp outlines of a sloop-of-war of very fine model, which came sweeping down into the midst of the frightened convoy, like a wolf into the midst of a flock of sheep.

All doubt as to her character was set at rest, when she suddenly opened a long row of ports, and ran up to the Seringapatam, which was at the head of the fleet, firing several guns at her in passing, the assault being followed by the almost instant fall of the Indiaman's flag. Then a boat was seen to drop from the side of the strange ship, and dart to the side of the Indiaman, whose sails were crowded, as soon as the boat had boarded her, in an effort to leave the fleet in the custody of a prize crew.

The strange ship, not waiting for the surrender of the Seringapatam, came on toward the Bombay, and ranged up on her quarter, with guns out and port-fires lighted, her men at quarters, in the grim order which characterizes a man-of-war going into action, and a voice shouted over the water:

"Do you surrender, or shall I fire into you?"

Captain Jones looked at his guest, the captain of the man-of-war, as if to ask what was to be done; and Paget glanced over at the Armada, now coming on through the midst of the convoy, and said:

"Keep him in talk as long as you can, Jones."

Captain Jones, with this for his only cue as to what he should do, shouted back through the trumpet:

"What ship is that, and what do you want?"

"I want you to strike your flag," was the reply. "Are you going to do it, or shall I fire? I give you just till I count five. One—two—three—four—"

"I surrender," roared Jones, completely demoralized at the peremptory summons. "Good heavens, man, there are ladies on this ship, and you will kill them all!"

"Heave to, then, and I will send a boat on board to take possession," cried the commander of the stranger, who could be seen on the poop of his ship, in the uniform of some navy, surrounded by officers.

Then Captain Paget said to Jones hurriedly, with a pallid face:

"Jones, I am ruined. There is not time even to get the boat's crew. What shall I do?"

The captain turned to the ladies, who were standing round, looking scared.

"Cannot you ladies hide the captain for awhile?" he asked, as he shifted uneasily from one foot to another. "There won't be any danger, as soon as the Armada comes up; but, in the mean time, we are at the mercy of this pirate."

The word "pirate" caused a shriek, and several ladies crowded round the captain, to hide him from the gaze of the enemy, in which condition he was whisked away down stairs, and into the cabin, where he was hidden in a state-room, while the rest of the ladies, fascinated at the spectacle of the strange ship, staid on deck to see what would come of the surrender, which they did not understand as yet.

They saw a boat drop from the side of the ship, and come over the water to the Bombay, rowed by a neat crew, of men-of-war's-men, who wore the name "WASP" on the front of their hats, and were all fully armed, with pistols and cutlasses.

They were commanded by a young officer, hardly more than a boy, whose age might have been nineteen, and whose fair hair and smooth face gave him an appearance of greater youth than he really possessed.

He climbed up the tall side of the ship, and said to the captain, with the curt decision of an older man:

"Fill away your maintopsail, captain, and stand out of the press. We have no time to lose; for that confounded line-of-battle ship is coming up, as fast as she can."

"Handle the ship yourself," was the sulky reply of the captain, who naturally felt angry at the ease with which the capture had been effected. "I'm not going to help you take my ship."

The young officer smiled, as he said:

"I think you had better do as I tell you, or the skipper may take a fancy to try a broadside, to bring you to your senses."

So saying he went to the side of the ship, and bailed the other, which still lay, where she had backed her maintopsail, astern of the Bombay. The young officer called out to her:

"Wasp ahoy! The Englishman refuses to fill his maintopsail. What shall I do, sir?"

"Shoot the captain, and give the command to the first mate," was the reply from the Wasp.

"We have no time to waste, sir. Shoot him down, and, if the mate refuses, shoot him too. Make them work, or shoot them down."

The young man, who was Midshipman Geisinger of the Wasp, turned to Jones, and drew his pistol, saying:

"Very sorry to have to do it, captain; but you heard the orders—"

And he was leveling the weapon to execute the merciless command, when the captain more demoralized than ever, exclaimed:

"Don't shoot! don't shoot! I'll do what you ask."

Then, in desperate haste he shouted to his men.

"Fill away the maintopsail! Lively, there, lively!"

And the main yard was swung, with a will, while the young prize-officer went to the taffrail, with a smile on his face, and said to the ladies, with great politeness:

"Sorry to have to intrude: but the orders are strict. I have to search the ship and find who is on board. We saw a man in uniform go down stairs, as we came up. You ladies can tell me who he was."

There was a dead silence in the group of ladies, and no one answered him, though their hearts beat high, for fear he might find out what they had been doing. That he suspected what was the matter, at the bottom of their silence was plain, when he turned to the entrance of the round-house, and said, with the same polite smile that he had worn all along:

"Sorry, very sorry, but I shall have to search the cabin, then."

And down stairs he went, followed, at a signal, by four men, with their weapons ready for instant use.

The captain of the Indiaman looked at his passengers, and then at the ship astern of him, which still kept in a raking position, as if ready, at the first sign of treachery, to open her batteries, and then his gaze wandered to the Armada, which was still pushing through the midst of the convoy to the rescue, but was hampered by the fact that the wind was very light, and that the Indiamen were crowded in the path in such a way that the big ship was compelled to make frequent detours to avoid collisions with the clumsily handled craft.

He saw that there was no chance of the man-of-war getting up in time to rescue the Bombay and saving the captain, and he rushed into the round-house to find the cabin in confusion, and the Yankee midy at the door of one of the state-rooms, where he was confronted by a number of ladies, to whom he was saying with a manner that denoted, for the first time since he had been on board, slight hesitation:

"Ladies, I beg of you to give way; for I must do my duty."

But the ladies stood firm, and seemed resolved to die at their posts rather than let the handsome captain be taken.

Jones, seeing that the resistance of the women could not save the captain, and might compromise them, went forward, and said to the young officer:

"Sir, if you will take the men away from that door, I will pledge my honor that the person concealed in that state-room shall come out and surrender."

Geisinger seemed grateful for the coming of the captain, for he was only a boy after all, and the presence of the ladies had demoralized him for a while.

He drew back from the door, and said:

"I consent, sir, if you will open the door at once; but I cannot neglect my duty. Go back to the deck, boys. Keep the ship in the wake of the Wasp."

The men, who seemed to be glad to get rid of the job on which they were engaged, went to the door and on deck, when Jones rapped on the door of the state-room, and said distinctly:

"My lord, it is no use. The Yankees have the best of us. You will have to surrender."

Then there was a wail from the ladies, as the captain of the Armada, his face crimson with mortification, came out of the state-room in his full uniform, and the astonished midshipman saw the game that he had unwittingly run to earth.

Lord Augustus Paget bowed to him, stiffly, and said:

"Well, sir, you have caught me napping, fairly, and I have no cause to complain. It is my own fault."

Geisinger bowed, rather puzzled, as he asked: "To whom have I the honor of speaking then, sir?"

The English captain answered, with the grand air that never deserted him in misfortune:

"I am Lord Augustus Paget, captain of the Armada, and I was on a visit to this ship, when you hove in sight. I suppose you will give me my parole to return, and take my ship home, not to serve against your nation till exchanged."

Geisinger was still more puzzled, brought up in the United States, in those simple times when there was not so much intercourse with Europe as to-day, and when the titles of Europe were not at all understood in America, he did not know what to make of the name of his prisoner. He had, however, the prudence of a native American, and was too cautious to give up the prize of unknown value, that had fallen into his hands so suddenly.

"I am very sorry, sir," he said, to the captain, "but you will have to go on board the Wasp, and be questioned by the captain. I don't know anything about these things, you know. If you will come with me, we will go there together."

Paget, not knowing what else to do, bowed and answered:

"As you please, sir."

The midshipman preceded him on deck, and he saw the Wasp had gone past the Bombay, and was coming up into the wind again, to accommodate her pace to that of the slow Indiaman, while the two were making the best of their way out of the convoy, after the Seringapatam, which had already gone off to leeward, and was fast getting out of gunshot, if the Armada should come up, which was not probable.

The great line-of-battle ship was moving on with slow and stately progress, gathering up her charges under her wing, but evidently not fully informed on what had happened in the convoy.

The number of ships was so great, and they were scattered over such a vast amount of space, that this was no wonder. Half of them could not be seen from the other half, for the intervening sails, and the people of the Armada could not see more than the ships in her immediate vicinity. Whether she had understood the signal guns, fired from the Bombay, was still a moot question, and on it depended, as Paget knew, his safety and rescue.

He followed the midshipman to the side, where the boat from the Wasp was still lying, with a boat-keeper in it, and observed:

"Why not take my gig, sir? She is here, by the other gangway, and my men are on board."

Geisinger looked at the Wasp, which was still at some distance off, and hesitated as he said:

"I don't think I ought to do it, sir. You are a valuable prisoner, and I cannot afford to lose you. I must signal the Wasp."

He went to the side of the ship and fired off his pistol in the air, when there was an immediate change in the position of the Wasp, and the ship tacked and came down on the Indiaman, luffing up across her stern, within speaking distance, when Blakeley hailed:

"What is the matter, Mr. Geisinger?"

"I have a prisoner, sir, the captain of the Armada; and he says his name is Lord Augustus something or other. What shall I do with him?" asked Max, with delightful democratic simplicity.

Lord Augustus himself could not help smile at the description of his title, and listened to the reply that came over the water:

"Ask him what his last name is."

"What is it, sir?" asked the midshipman in an undertone to Paget.

The captain answered, and the midshipman communicated the intelligence to his commander, who immediately hailed back:

"Send a boat with him at once, sir. Send the prisoners with him, such as would be dangerous to us."

Geisinger turned to Paget.

"You can order your gig now, sir."

A few minutes later Lord Augustus Paget was transferred bodily to the care of his foes, and found himself on the deck of the sloop-of-war, confronted by the handsome captain of the Wasp, who said to him, with a smile:

"I will not insult you by saying I am glad to see you, my lord; for you might retort that you were not by any means glad to see me; but I will say that it is a very lucky thing for me you have been out visiting to-day."

Paget was too much mortified to answer in the good-tempered way that he would like to have done, but he managed to say:

"I cannot complain, sir. It is my own fault. You will not profit much by it, however. You do not hope to escape the Armada, I suppose."

Blakeley looked over at the majestic ship, that was coming through the crowd of Indiamen, like a swan among the ducks, and answered:

"I actually do, sir, strange as it may seem. The Armada is a very fine ship, and has the reputation of being unusually fast for a line-of-battle ship; but I will back the Wasp against her, at her best. You are too important a prize for me to let you go, and so I propose to make a cartel of the next prize I take, and send you in for exchange."

"Why not set me at liberty on parole?" said the captain quickly. "It is a very mortifying position for me, sir, and I am willing to do a great deal to escape from it. If you will put me into my boat, and let me go to my own ship, I will give my word to take no steps against your Government, till I am exchanged."

Blakeley listened to him, and asked him:

"And what security have I that you will keep your parole? The temptation to break it is very great, and I should not be justified in letting you go, without grave reason."

Paget flushed scarlet.

"I am not accustomed to have my word doubted, sir, and it is the word of a British officer and a gentleman. Who are you, sir, that doubts it? If you were on shore, I should demand satisfaction for the doubt at once."

Blakeley faced him with a flush as angry as his own, as he retorted:

"I am a man who comes from as good a family as your own, Lord Augustus. The Pagets were never heard of before Henry the Seventh, but the Blakes were kings when there was no king in England!"

The accent of his country came out the moment he was angry, and the English captain turned redder than before, as he said, scornfully:

"Aha, I see! A renegade to the country that gave you birth. I see why you doubt my word. Well, do your worst, you Irish traitor!"

It was in the spirit of those times when the British naval officer, however high in rank, was very apt to be a bully and a blackguard when he let his true nature out.

Lord Augustus Paget was, like the rest, as bigoted as a Spanish priest, and full of prejudices against Irishmen.

He glared at the other as if he would like to have a fair field with him, sword-in-hand, and Blakeley met him with the same spirit, saying:

"You know that you are a prisoner, and so try to provoke me to do you an injustice that you may use against me some day. Well, I shall not give you the chance that you are looking for. You shall go free, without any parole, and I will take these two ships, and publish the fact all over France that you were my prisoner and that I let you go."

Paget shook his fist in the face of his captor, as he retorted:

"I take no favors from you, sir, and I won't have them. I will go on parole, or else you can take me and kill me here on this deck. It is my opinion that you are a coward, after all."

The insult was open, and so gross that for a moment the officers of the Wasp had a notion to step forward to avert a most unseemly struggle between the two men, who hated each other as badly as had Lord John Manners and the captain when they had met before.

But they were mistaken if they thought that Blakeley was going to lose his temper under any provocation. The greater it was, the closer was the watch he kept on himself.

He turned to the officer of the deck, and said:

"See this gentleman over the side. I want no prisoners who are mine by accident. Lord Augustus, you are free to go back to your own ship as soon as you wish."

Then as the other, not knowing what to make of it all, hesitated, he added, in a tone only loud enough to be heard by him:

"I shall be in L'Orient on the Fourth of July, if you dare to come there. I will meet you, and you can see if you dare to back what you have just said about me. Good-day, sir."

And Lord Augustus Paget went over the side of the Wasp, not knowing whether to be most angry at his own stupidity in getting taken, or most humiliated at the way in which he had been released.

CHAPTER XXV.

CHECK AND COUNTERCHECK.

WHEN the English captain went over the side, he went into his own boat, which had been put into the water on his departure from the Bombay, with its crew in it, and had been ordered to wait on the Wasp. Now it lay, exposed to the fire of the American ship, so that nothing would have been easier than to have blown it out of the sea, resistance being impossible. The English captain saw this, and his first move was to get his boat out of the line of fire, and shelter it behind one of the Indiamen in the neighborhood, which was quickly effected, when he ordered his men to pull their best to the Armada, in the midst of the fleet.

The Bombay and the captured Seringapatam moved off at their best speed, and the captain of the Armada saw that they would be out of gunshot before he could get to his ship.

The Armada was slow to extricate herself from the crowd of sails around her, and when Paget at last arrived near his ship, the two prizes, so cleverly snatched from his grasp, were off to the leeward of the whole fleet, and making the best of their way to the westward.

Not much time was consumed in getting aboard the ship, by the mortified commander, and he found his first lieutenant, Mr. Harwood, who had got there before him, very much relieved, as he expressed himself, to find that his commander had not been captured by the enemy. The words of Mr. Harwood were very sweet; but it was a matter of remark, down in the gun-room, where the officers messed together, that Harwood had been very cool and unconcerned when it was thought that the captain had been captured, and that he had been heard to say something to the effect that "people who take risks must take the consequences." Mr. Harwood himself had got back to the Armada, from the Seringapatam, before the arrival of the strange sail, and had had what he thought very good luck in the operation. Being conscious that his own absence was without the leave of his commander, he had kept his eyes open while he was on his visit, and had spied the strange sail when she first hove in sight. He had had no grave suspicion of her, but had seen the propriety of going back to his own ship, in case she should turn out to be an enemy. The consequence was that he had boarded the Armada when the strange ship was not yet among the convoy, and had had the disgust of seeing the capture of the Seringapatam, from a distance so great that it was out of his power to rescue her. He had made the best of his way, with the ship, through the entangling Indiamen, but had been too late to avert the catastrophe, and was trying to get out, so as to chase the captor of the prizes, when he saw the gig of his captain coming to the ship as hard as it could be rowed.

The sight was by no means a welcome one to Harwood, who had been indulging visions of promotion from the absence of his commander, and saw them rudely dashed from him by the return of Lord Augustus, whose first words as he arrived on the deck were:

"Harwood, why the deuce didn't you come up sooner?"

"Because the confounded Indiamen were in the way, my lord," was the reply of the lieutenant, in a sullen tone. "I am glad to see that the enemy didn't get your lordship, though. We thought you were gone for a certainty."

"I have no doubt of it," was the dry reply. "It would have given you a step, perhaps, Harwood; but I am not gotten rid of so easily. Get all the sail on the ship you can, sir, and stand after that Yankee pirate."

So saying, he retired to his cabin, too much mortified by his morning's diversion to face the looks of his officers, conscious that the story of his capture and release by the Yankees would soon be all over the ship from the stories of his boat's crew.

He did not come on deck for half an hour, and when he did the ship had cleared the convoy, and was stretching out, over the open sea beyond, after three sails that were fleeing before her.

The Indiamen, in a bunch, were sailing on, ready to repel an assault, if need be, for they were all armed with from ten to twenty guns, and fright had made them get into some sort of a naval order of battle. The strange sloop-of-war was astern of the two Indiamen that she had taken so cleverly, and they were crowding all the sail they could carry to get away. The swiftness of the Armada, all the more unusual that she was a line-of-battle ship, was such that she was overhauling the sternmost ship fast, and the prospect of a speedy vengeance for the humiliation of the morning opened before the captain.

When he saw this his face cleared, and he said to Harwood, more graciously than he had spoken when he came on board:

"The ship does well, Harwood; doesn't she?"

"Very well, my lord. She has need to," was Harwood's dry reply. "We need all the sail we can carry, to excuse us when we get home."

Captain Paget colored, but made no remark beyond:

"All's well that ends well, Harwood. We shall take that fellow in for his impudence."

"I am not so sure of that, my lord," said Harwood. "He is waiting for his prizes, and sees that they will be taken from him, but I am not sure that we can take himself, for he sails well."

As the lieutenant spoke, the ship was within about a mile and a half of the Wasp, and the captain took a long look at the chase through the glass.

"I think, Harwood, we are near enough to let him have a shot," he said. "The forty-twos will reach him, I think."

"Shall I order a gun or two fired, sir?"

"Yes. Let the gunner pick out the best shot in the ship, and try three or four rounds, to find if we have the range."

The first-lieutenant went away to give the order, and the Armada continued to gain on the three sails that she was chasing, while the fleet

of Indiamen were being left further and further behind.

At last Harwood came on deck to report that the guns were all loaded, and that, if the captain wished, he would order the ship's course changed, so as to bring them to bear.

It was only necessary to yaw slightly, for the bridle-ports of the Armada were arranged to use as many guns as possible as chasers, and, before she had swept aside for the space of two minutes, the heavy reports of three guns came booming back to the quarter-deck, and the shots could be traced, skipping over the sea toward the sloop-of-war, which was still in the rear of her prizes. The lines of spray were nearly together, and the guns were unusually well aimed, for the missiles went as straight for the stern of the Wasp as if they had been sent by the best of artillerymen.

Then came a great dash of spray in the air, over the stern of the Wasp, and the captain of the Armada exclaimed:

"Hit, by Heavens! Good shot, whoever fired it."

Then they all looked through the glass at the chase, to see what damage had been done by the shots, but, after a long examination, it seemed as if whatever had been done had not been visible.

"I don't understand it," muttered Paget. "I saw it hit, as plain as ever I saw anything, and she does not seem to have been hurt at all. What can the reason be?"

"It was a lucky sea, I think, sir. Did you not notice the spray as the shot reached her. The aim was good, but the elevation was at fault. I don't believe one of them hit her."

As he spoke, the sloop-of-war stretched out from her yards the canvas that she had hitherto kept furled or flapping, to keep her pace down to the capacity of the slower Indiamen, and began to pass them, with a speed that showed how she had been playing with them hitherto.

"There go his heels," observed the lieutenant to the commander of the Armada, as he watched her. "She got something, or thought she might get it, next time. We shall get back the prizes, if she does not burn them."

Every artifice that is known to naval men was now used to increase the speed of the Armada, and enable her to come up with the chase, while they watched with interest the maneuvers of the Wasp.

They saw her, from the deck of the line-of-battle ship, pass the Bombay first, and as she passed, a boat was dropped from the side of the Indiaman, and pulled to the Wasp.

"That means that she gives up one of the prizes," quoth Lord Augustus Paget, as he watched the proceeding with interest.

His lordship felt great interest in this particular ship because it contained the heiress that he hoped to make Lady Augustus at some not very distant date, and so found a new house which should equal the glories of the elder branch of the Pagets.

If Miss Stokes was left to his rescue, she would be sure to say "yes" whenever he asked her—at least so he thought—and the other ship might go on for all he cared.

Harwood, on the other hand, had been on the Seringapatam that day, carrying on a sentimental flirtation with the other heiress, Minnie Moore.

He had never been to India, and consequently had no idea of the prejudice existing there against Eurasians—as great as that in the West Indies against people of mixed negro blood.

He only saw that she was very beautiful, and had heard that she had a large fortune: therefore, Harwood had made the most of his time, when he had a chance away from the ship, which was not often.

That day, when he left the Seringapatam, he told Minnie Moore the reason that he was leaving, and the suspicions that he entertained against the ship that had not then revealed her true character. Now, if he could rescue the young lady, he felt that he would have as good a title to her gratitude as the captain would have to the gratitude of the whiter, but not half so beautiful, Miss Jenny Stokes.

The Armada rushed on through the waters, and it soon became plain that she was coming up with the Bombay.

The sloop-of-war was already going off of gunshot fast, and had the heels of the line-of-battle ship fast as the latter was. The Seringapatam was a much faster ship than the Bombay, and was trying her best to keep pace with the Wasp; but the latter had to haul down her royals to keep pace with the Indiaman, though the bigger ship was covered with canvas from her trucks to her decks, and had the stunnails out on both sides of her tall masts.

On went the Armada, and the Bombay was getting within gunshot when the man-of-war yawed again, and fired a shot from one of her long forty-twos so close to the Indiaman that she instantly hauled her wind and lay to for the Armada to come up, not anxious to secure a repetition of the dose that had greeted her.

The great "liner" came rushing by her, and as she passed the captain looked over the side and saw that the master of the Indiaman was on

his own deck again and all safe, while the presence of the ladies showed that no great harm had been done by the enemy.

As he passed, Paget hailed:

"Bombay ahoy! Is Captain Jones there?"

"All right, my lord," called the captain himself. "The Yankees have stripped the ship of all they could take away, but your shot frightened them."

"Did you see if the sloop-of-war was hit?" asked Paget, as he rushed by.

The answer was undistinguishable, but the energetic nod of the captain as he went by was enough to show that he meant "yes."

Then the man-of-war went on after the chase, and soon was overhauling the Seringapatam but not the Wasp.

Harwood rubbed his hands, as he thought of the advantage he would have, over all other suitors, when he came to Minnie Moore in the character of a conquering hero, and had already begun to compose his speech, when he saw the Wasp suddenly tack and come short round, back at the man-of-war, as if she was going to engage her.

That this was her intention, was apparent from the fact that she fired a gun to windward, and came on defiantly, showing her flag, and trying all that she could to taunt her enemy into following her.

That the taunt was likely to succeed, was apparent to Harwood, as he looked at his captain, who seemed to have been strangely put out that day, by the humiliation to which he had been subjected.

As soon as he saw the Wasp put out her flag, and defy him, he rapped out to Harwood:

"The insolent scoundrel! Give him a broadside, Harwood! I'll blow him out of the water, for his pains."

"We are out of range, sir, I am afraid," said Harwood, cautiously; "and, if we try to get into it, we shall be very apt to lose the other ship that we must recapture, if we are sharp enough."

"Beat to quarters anyway, and give him one broadside," was the obstinate answer; and the Armada's course was changed from the chase of the Seringapatam, to follow the Wasp, which was at the extreme limit of the carrying power of the guns of the liner.

The Seringapatam, in the mean time, had gone off on a diverging path from that taken by the Wasp, and the latter stood a good chance of saving her prize, if the English ship did not give over the chase of the sloop-of-war.

By the time the men were at quarters, and the guns of the lower loaded, the Indiaman, after which they had been going, was nearly a mile further than she had been, when the Wasp started to draw the Armada from the chase. When the English ship fired her broadside at last, all could see, from the splashes made by the shot, that it had been fired out of range, and the Wasp not hit at all.

When this became apparent to Paget, his anger and obstinacy yielded to the inevitable, and he ordered the course of the ship laid once more toward the Seringapatam, which, in the meanwhile, had gained a distance that enabled her to have a hope of ultimate escape.

The man-of-war, however, kept on the chase, with a steadiness that rapidly closed the gap between her and the Seringapatam, till the latter ship was within less than a mile, when a single gun from the bow-chaser of the Armada ended the affair. This first shot hit the Indiaman in the stern, and she hove to, and dropped her flag, with a suddenness that showed how scared her prize-master was at the attack.

As this happened, a boat was seen to drop from her side and pull away, straight in the wind's eye, toward the sloop-of-war, which had kept hanging round the chase, just out of gun-shot. The Armada kept on her course for the Indiaman, suspecting a trick, and, when she arrived alongside the Seringapatam, the first hail that was heard from the ship was the cry of distress:

"Armada ahoy! Your shot struck us between wind and water and the ship is leaking heavily."

The captain of the Armada gave a hasty order to send a crew on board the recaptured prize and help stop the leak and then turned his attention to the Wasp, which was making after the Bombay, now a mile or more astern, and in danger from the enemy again.

The boldness of the American commander appeared in the way in which he hung to the chances that he still had, to carry off one of the Indiamen. The Armada had all she could do to get up to the Bombay to prevent her from being taken a second time, and when the man-of-war at last got back to the Seringapatam, and gathered her recovered charges under her wing, the sun was setting, and the fleet of the Indiamen were far away to windward, the Wasp standing after them, as if she still hoped to get one of them, before their guardian could get back.

The Bombay and Seringapatam were left behind, with orders to follow the Armada, as fast as they could, and the ship-of-war began to fire guns and hoist signals, to recall the Indiamen.

As the darkness closed in, they obeyed the signal, and came down all together, in a line, with such a formidable display of force as might well have daunted a less desperate captain than the commander of the Wasp. The last sight of that ship, gained as the night closed in, she was passing along the front of the line of Indiamen, as if looking for a chance to get at one of them, away from the rest.

Then the watches were set for the night, and the captain of the Armada passed the time till midnight in pacing the deck and signaling, with guns and lanterns, to the Indiamen, which were all the time coming nearer and nearer.

As the ship's bells struck midnight, the fleet was at last reunited, and the Armada kept on her course in peace. She had saved her convoy.

CHAPTER XXVI. THE CHALLENGE.

BUT for all that the Armada had saved her convoy, as far as she knew, when the morning dawned, one of the Indiamen was missing, and no one could tell where she had gone. It was not the Bombay or the Seringapatam, but another, that no one had thought of as being in danger, she being one of the fastest ships in the fleet, and having forged ahead of the whole of the Indiamen unperceived.

How she had been captured was a mystery to all, for no guns had been heard in the night, and yet, when the morning came, she was gone.

Her name was the Rajah, and she was loaded with a very valuable cargo, so that it became a matter of salvage to get her back, and the captain of the Armada was sorely puzzled what to do.

His ship was all alone, and he sorely wanted, that day, a light frigate or a brig-of-war, that might be employed as a scout, to hunt for the enemy.

As he had none of these, he was compelled to stomach his loss, and lay it, in his report of the voyage, to the rashness of the captain of the Rajah, in going too far from the protection of the convoying ship. But the experience of the day before had not cured him of his passion of visiting the Indiamen, and he went, the very morning after the trouble on board the Bombay, taking the precaution to keep his own ship near the Indiaman, so as to avoid the unpleasant necessity he had been under the day before, of surrendering to a despised foe, without a chance of resistance.

He went to see Miss Stokes, and she and the other ladies were loud in their praises and thanks "for the gallant way in which he had rescued them from the power of the terrible Yankee pirates," though they could not help all sorts of sly jokes about the way in which he had been trapped. Their curiosity was also roused as to how he had made his escape, when every one had expected him to be carried off by the Yankee ship, as a prisoner. The captain evaded their curiosity on this point, for he did not like to acknowledge that he had been released on condition that he should meet the Yankee at L'Orient, and fight a duel with him, which was the real state of the case. He gave them a story of how he had pulled away from the ship in his gig, amid a shower of shot, and had run the gantlet of the Wasp's fire, which they could not contradict, for there had been so much firing and confusion at the time that no one could tell what had happened in any other ship but their own.

Then the fleet settled down to the routine of the home voyage, and the captain of the Armada had dinner on board the Bombay, and was thinking of returning to his own ship in the afternoon, when he was warned, by the sound of a gun from the Armada, and the rapid approach of that ship, that something was happening that required his attention again.

The Indiamen felt the excitement that was indicated by the shot, and showed symptoms of confusion as they huddled together. The sounds of hurried orders from the captains echoed through the fleet, and in the midst of it all, the Armada came rushing down to the Bombay, to get back her captain, who had his boat at the side in very short order. When he got aboard, he found the cause of the gun to have been the reappearance of the strange sloop-of-war, in the western horizon, alone, and coming straight toward the convoy.

The whole fleet was gathered into the closest possible order, and the Armada took her position to windward of the convoy, and placed so as to intercept the strange ship, should she try to repeat her game of the day before.

Paget was rather puzzled at the coming of the Wasp again, after the narrow escape she had had the day before, and watched her with interest, as she came sailing along to within about three miles, when she hung out the American flag, and began to signal the "liner."

The signal midshipman was called up, and the signal-book consulted to find out what the stranger wanted.

To the surprise of every one, the signals turned out to be English, and intelligible. The first that was hoisted was:

"I want to speak to you."

"Ask the impudent scamp what he wants?" the captain said.

The signal was hoisted, and the reply came: "I took the Rajah yesterday. I want to make an exchange."

Paget was puzzled.

"To exchange what? We have nothing of his that I know of."

Then he added:

"Tell him that, if he wants to speak to me, he can come alongside, and I will give him his present distance before he shall be fired on. We may as well see what he wants. There's no telling where the impudence of these Yankees will stop."

The signal was hoisted, and the answer came back:

"Send a boat to me, and I will guarantee it safe conduct."

"The gentleman is not so rash as he seemed at first," remarked Harwood, dryly. "He does not intend to put himself into our power, and I don't blame him, for I should fire into him the moment he got within range if the choice was mine. Will you send a boat, sir?"

Paget nodded. He was puzzled what the enemy could possibly want of him in the present position of affairs, and he wanted to find out what it was.

"Take the jolly boat, and go," he said to Harwood. "I will give the man credit that he is not apt to fire on a flag of truce. Bring me back word what he wants."

Harwood did not like the office much; but there was no help when the captain gave the order, and he took the boat as ordered, and went over the swells to the Wasp, which had hove to, waiting for the boat.

As the English lieutenant approached the sloop-of-war, he was struck by the symmetry of her appearance and the graceful lines of her hull, as she rode to the swells. The Armada was a handsome ship; but the Wasp, while not so large, was finer in every respect, and attracted his unqualified admiration as a sailor.

When he arrived he was received at the gangway by a very gentlemanly young officer, who told him to "come to the quarter-deck, and be introduced to the captain."

Harwood had hitherto had an idea that the Yankees were a set of savages, who lived in the backwoods and had no manners.

Instead of that, he was received by people that he could see to be just as well brought up as himself, and whose way of talking, while it was marked by a few pronunciations that grated on his English ears, was yet clean and perfectly free from the intonations of vulgarity, that are so unmistakable.

The young officer introduced himself as Mr. Marion of the U. S. Navy, and Harwood said, in a sort of inquiring way:

"Any relation to that General Marion, of whom we used to hear?"

Young Marion smiled.

"My grand uncle, sir."

Then Harwood thought to himself that he might have made a mistake in despising the Yankees.

He was taken to the quarter-deck, and there introduced to a tall gentleman as "Captain Blakeley."

The captain bowed to him very politely, and asked him into the cabin, where he set wine and biscuits before his guest, and treated him in a fashion of hospitality that made Harwood feel, more than ever, that he had underrated the Yankees, before he opened the business that had brought him there.

"Well, captain, I suppose that we had better get to our work. You have asked for an interview. May I ask with what motive?"

Blakeley smiled as he said:

"I supposed that you knew all about it, sir. Is it possible your captain has not told you?"

"Told me of what?" asked the Englishman, bewildered.

"Of the little difficulty that we had, yesterday. You see, if I had kept the advantage that your captain's carelessness had given me, I might have got out of the fleet with him as a prisoner, and you would never have caught me."

"But I understood that the captain had escaped," interposed Harwood.

Blakeley shook his head.

"By no means. On the contrary he was taken on the Bombay, and brought to my ship as a prisoner. While here, he permitted himself to utter some words that I regarded as personally offensive, and I let him go on the condition that he would meet me at L'Orient, which is now neutral territory, where we should be able to settle the difference like gentlemen."

Harwood stared at him in surprise, as he ejaculated:

"And did you signal us for that, sir?"

"Why, certainly. I thought that your captain would naturally like to know whether I was of the same mind still. I am willing to meet him at any place that he may agree to, as the most convenient."

Harwood rose at once, saying:

"Then I must go back to my ship, sir. I have no instructions to arrange for anything of the sort. We are at war, and private duels are not recognized. I will tell the captain what you ask, sir."

"That is all that I desire," said Blakeley, stiffly. "I am, as you are doubtless aware, from my accent, a foe to England beyond the mere chances of this war, and anxious to fight all the Englishmen I can. If your captain does not consent to appoint a time and place for the interview I request, I shall take care that all Europe knows what sort of a man he is. Good-day, sir."

And he bowed Harwood out of the cabin, in a grimly polite way that showed how he was keeping down the naturally fierce temper he owned.

Harwood returned to the Armada, rather inclined to set down the captain of the Wasp as a maniac on the subject of dueling; but, in those days, to refuse to fight a duel was hardly possible and the lieutenant felt that his captain was just the man to take the challenge he was bearing him in earnest, and to accept it forthwith.

The wind was light that day, and the boat soon reached the ship, while the American lay, with her maintopsail to the mast, out of gunshot of the Armada, as if waiting for the answer.

Harwood got on board and went to the captain's cabin with his message, at which he expected to be greeted with a burst of anger.

He was surprised to hear the captain say:

"Well, of course, there is no alternative, Harwood. I shall have to fight the fellow. But I am not going to wait for L'Orient either. We are not far from Gibraltar, and Spain is a neutral ground. I can meet him there if he wants. He can go into Cadiz, and the convoy can shelter at Gibraltar."

Harwood looked aghast as he asked:

"But what will the admiral say to that, sir?"

Lord Augustus shrugged his shoulders, as he replied:

"Harwood, the service is going to the devil, and I am going out of it."

"I don't care a curse what the admiral thinks of it. If this man wants me to fight him, I am not going to peril my position at home, for the sake of the confounded service. Signal him to send me a boat and I will send him an answer."

The captain wrote while the lieutenant was on deck, signaling, and before half an hour had passed a boat from the Wasp was bearing to Blakeley Paget's proposition to meet him at Cadiz. The boat had not been at the Wasp five minutes more, ere the signal was hoisted:

"Conditions accepted."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE IRISH ROSE.

IN the cabin of the Wasp, at the time that the English lieutenant was holding his conversation with the captain, a listener, unsuspected by Harwood, was in hearing of the whole talk, and, as soon as Blakeley had dismissed the Briton, this listener came out; in the shape of a young lady, and addressed Blakeley, with some bitterness:

"Are you not a foolish man, to throw away all the successes that you have gained, by consenting to fight this Englishman among his friends? You should have kept him while you had him. Now he will triumph over us again."

Blakeley turned to his sister to say:

"Rose, you have seen how I took the Reindeer, and how the enemy of our house was met, and forced to own that the Irish-American could outfight him, at every game he tried. This Paget is another of the same sort. He has made his boasts that the Yankees are only good to fight with the chances on their side, and that, in the close strife that shows what men are made of, the Englishman is still master of the world. I am going to show him that the Yankee can meet him anywhere and at any time, and beat him. Don't be alarmed about me, child. I am able to take care of the Blakes against any Paget that ever stepped. We shall sail for Cadiz at once."

The girl looked at him in a melancholy way, as she said:

"I don't know what it is that gives me this feeling, John; but it seems to me this is the last time we shall ever be together, and that this voyage is destined to end in misfortune."

"And why should you think that?" he asked, with some vexation. "I have not done badly so far have I?"

"No, not badly—"

"I should say not. I have been at sea but a week, since I came back from England, and already I have destroyed a brig-of-war of equal force to my own ship, and have taken a rich prize from under the nose of this proud captain, and his seventy-four. My mission in these seas is to fight, and to put the name of Blake where it will be coupled with Paul Jones and the great Blake, and no longer with the death of our father, at the hands of a tyrant government. You have suffered enough from that, Rose, and now the time is coming when you shall share in the triumph that awaits us, when we go home—"

"Home!" interrupted Rose, with the same

melancholy accent that had marked her previous speech. "Ah, John, we have no home, and no country now. Have you forgotten that?"

Blakeley rose and laid his hand on his sister's shoulder.

"You are wrong, child. We have the greatest country on the face of the earth. We belong to that land where the poor and oppressed of all the earth are welcome, and where all mankind can meet on common ground, as equals. You do not know America yet, Rose, but you shall. You will be happy there."

Rose shook her head.

"I hope so; but I am afraid. Oh, John, why was I not taken when I was a child as you were to that land you love so well and which I have never seen in all my life? You do not know women, if you think they are ready to cast aside the memories of childhood in a moment and accept new ties. I sometimes think that we, who have lost all in the old world, are not fit to take up the struggle of life in the new one. It seems so hard to go there; to give up all that one has been taught to love and cherish; to take new ideas; to learn to hate the things one has loved, and to love the things one has hated. I have wondered whether it would not be better for us both to die, and end the strife."

The captain of the Wasp looked at his sister with surprise, as she spoke. She was very much moved, and he saw that it was really hard for her to keep back the tears.

He gathered her in his arms, to ask softly:

"Rose, what is the matter? Tell me, and I promise that if I can do anything to help you, I will do it. There is something under all this that you have not told me yet."

Rose looked at him timidly, as she said:

"You will think ill of me, if I tell you."

"I promise you, no. I have too much love for you, not to feel for your position. It is even more cruel than my own, child, and God knows that is needless. Tell me what is the matter?"

Thus encouraged, Rose crept close to her brother and whispered:

"John, dear, I knew the gentleman who was in the cabin to-day."

Blakeley looked at her sharply, to ask:

"Where? when? You never told me."

"I never had a chance till to-day. I have met him at uncle's house, when he was only a midshipman, and I a child, but we have been close friends and—"

Here the girl hesitated, and her color rose so high that the captain asked, in a tone that he could not make other than stern:

"And do you mean to say that you have been taught to love him among the other things that you spoke of?"

Rose was silent; but the color on her cheek, and the way she avoided her brother's glance, was enough.

He seemed to be very much affected by the discovery, for he turned away from her for a moment, as if he could not bear to look on her, and paced the cabin several times before he came back, to say:

"How long has this being going on, Rose?"

"I can hardly say," she answered. "As long as I was a child, I had no thought of marriage; but as I grew up and he came home at the end of every voyage, I learned to think of him, and he of me. We had an understanding when we last met that—"

"That what, Rose?"

"That we should be married when he was a captain. Uncle consented, and it was understood that the influence of the house should be thrown in his favor."

"And how is it that I never heard of this till now? Bampton gave me no hint that it was the case."

"Are you sure that he said *nothing* to you, that you did not understand?" asked Rose, timidly. "I told him not to deceive you."

Blakeley thought a little, and then reflected that the smuggler had dropped several broad hints, that might have told him that the feelings of his sister were not all that he might have wished as regarded hatred to England. He began to remember that Bampton had said to him:

"*She has seen nothing but good of England, and you will seem to her unnatural when you wage war with her. Did you never think of that?*"

In his bitterness he had then said:

"*There is only one thing left, to fill the cup—that she should marry an Englishman, and learn to hate her own country.*"

Now the cup was filled. The sister he had come across the Atlantic, at the risk of his life, to see and reclaim, had told him that she loved an English officer. That she hated his adopted country was the natural sequence, and it was with the bitterness of a disappointed man that he said:

"Be it so, child. You shall be happy with your lover, and I can bear my own burden alone. Does he know that you are The Blake's child?"

"No. He was always told that my name was Rose Lynch, and he thought so. My uncle seemed to be very anxious that he should."

"Ay, ay," said the exile bitterly. "Bampton was wise in his generation, and he knew that if you were known to this Englishman as the child of what he calls a traitor, he would scorn you. Where is your pride gone, Rose? You were proud enough when the Manners puppy barked at you. Bampton told me how you behaved. You made no opposition to going from England, and when you came aboard this ship you seemed to be pleased. What has changed you now?"

Rose hung her head as she said:

"I don't know, unless it is that I had not seen him then."

Then she suddenly threw her arms around her brother's neck, and began to plead to him in broken accents:

"John, dear, I was not made for a heroine. I cannot help it, and I ought never have come with you. You gave me the choice when you were in London, and I was so much struck by your loneliness that I could not let you go away without me. You were all alone, and I was your own sister and the only relative you had in the world. But I have been thinking a good deal since I have been here, and I can hardly bear the constant fighting that goes on. It is breaking me down, and I shall disgrace you some day."

Blakeley put away the clinging arms gently, to say:

"I have spoken, child. You shall have your lover, and I can go, as I have gone all my life, alone. You shall not have to plead to me again."

So saying, he went on deck and ordered the head of the ship laid to the eastward, where the fleet of Indiamen was slowly moving over the face of the sea, guarded by the majestic Armada.

The whole of the ships were then near the latitude of the Madeira Islands, and the light and baffling winds that prevailed at that time of year in that vicinity, made it difficult to push on, whatever might be the wishes of the captains.

The Wasp, with her light canvas set, was to windward, and stretching away to the east, she passed the whole fleet, almost within gunshot.

The Armada, as if to guard her charges, altered her course and came sweeping out to drive off the expected assault; but the Yankee corvette passed along on the same course, and went out of sight in the east as if she was standing straight for the Straits of Gibraltar—the very goal to which the Indiamen were holding their way.

As she sailed faster than the fleet, nearly two to one (the Armada being obliged to keep under her topsails alone to accommodate her pace to that of the crawlers that she had to guard), it was not very long before the Wasp was out of sight, and the shades of night fell on the fleet as if they were chasing her into the very port of all others where she dared not go at that period of time.

Two days after, the Armada arrived in Gibraltar, and the Indiamen anchored in peace.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A BRIEF DUEL.

THE harbor of Cadiz in the year 1814 held a peculiar position with regard to Americans. The United States was at peace with Spain, and therefore the port ought to have been counted on as neutral; but, as a matter of fact, Spain at that time, having been in close alliance with the English through all the Peninsular War, was not disposed to give the Americans any privileges; and only allowed them, in the most grudging way, the favor of buying provisions and taking water. As for selling prizes, the experiment had only been tried once, in the early part of the war, and had never been repeated, for no one had been found to bid; and the Americans had to run the prize out of the harbor at night, to prevent the English frigates from taking her away, regardless of the ordinary obligations of neutral ports. The instance of the Essex, fired into and captured before the port of Valparaiso, then in the hands of Spain, was too recent to be forgotten; and it was not dreamed that any Yankee ship would be bold enough to come into a Spanish port again, especially in Europe.

Therefore it was a surprise and almost a consternation that fell on the companies of the British brigs, Avon and Castilian, in that harbor, a few days after the taking of the Rajah from the convoy of the Armada, to see a man-of-war with the American ensign at her peak coming into the harbor in broad daylight, with that captured ship close behind her, and come to anchor before the custom-house, as if she feared nothing.

The very boldness of the act was the salvation of the Wasp. She came in with her men at quarters, and ranged up between the two English brigs, as they lay, head and stern on a line, so as to be able to rake either, if there was any sign of hostility.

The English captains were not on board at the time; for, the conflict between the European powers being over, the discipline of war had relaxed and the settled condition of peace had

not yet commenced; so that everything was at "sixes and sevens." Captain Sheard, of the Avon, was ashore at the house of a Spanish friend, whose pretty daughter he was courting industriously; Captain Bloxom, of the Castilian, was in a tavern with some friends, drinking to the health of the Duke of Wellington; and the crews of both ships were scattered all over the city, as drunk as only sailors can get, when they have a liberty day ashore, after a long and tedious cruise.

But there was no doubt of the nationality of the strange ship.

Her flag was hoisted as proudly as if she wished it to be known that she had come to stay, and her people looked over at the few men and officers that were left on board the two brigs, and called out all sorts of questions in the free-and-easy style that prevails when both parties to a war speak the same tongue.

The Englishmen, on their part, gave back as much slang as they got, and threatened the intruders that "they would never get out of the harbor with the ship," to which one of the Yankee sailors replied:

"Yes we will, and take your darned old brigs with us, too."

Then came a stern order from the quarter-deck of the American ship to "stop that skylarking," and thereafter the intercourse between the vessels was conducted on the sternly civil footing that is usual when two parties to a fight have to meet on neutral ground for a short time, and are careful to treat each other with the utmost civility.

The officers and men of the Wasp went ashore, after the arrival of the ship, a few at a time, and were seen all over the city, where they met the British with a mixture of politeness and sarcasm that produced more than one quarrel, and would have resulted in serious riots near the quay, had not the Spanish police come down on the combatants and threatened to put them all in the stocks, if the matter was not dropped.

What had brought the Yankee into port was a mystery that few in the English vessels were competent to solve. They apprehended danger from the bold way in which the Wasp had come to anchor; but what the scheme was they could not tell. Both the English captains got to their vessels as soon as they could, and made preparations to get their men on board, but it was surprising how little the men seemed to care for their officers. Jack ashore, with a day's liberty, is a very different man from Jack at sea, with all the restraints of discipline about him, and the fear of the boatswain's mate at his back.

The middies of the Avon were run to death all over the town, and could not get a man, and the captain did not dare to send a press-gang, for fear the press-gang might get drunk too, and go off with the rest. Both captains had to resign themselves to the inevitable, and resolve to get the men in the morning, when they would go to sea and wait for the Yankee outside.

The scheme was a good one, but it had one weak point. It implied that the Yankee would wait for them, and fight them at their own time and place. The day passed, and, in the afternoon, the gig of the American captain was seen to leave the side of the Wasp and pull to shore, where the captain stepped on the quay in full uniform, and went to pay his respects to the Governor of the city. He went with a party of officers, and left a boat with an armed crew, at the steps.

When he came back from his visit to the Governor, the news spread all over the city that the "*Capitan Yanquio*" had come to Cadiz to fight a duel, and that the captain of the port had given permission, and was going to witness the affair, which was to come off at sunset, before the citadel. It also transpired that the other party to the duel was an English officer, who had come on by land from Gibraltar, and was at the *Posada de Espana*, kept by the only French cook who had remained in Spain, since the expulsion of the invaders by the *Ingleses*.

The story was that a party had been made up to come down from Gibraltar, and that the fight was expected to be a very fine sight. The Spaniards were at that time, as at present, fonder of bloodshed than any people in Europe, and the idea of dueling excited no horror in their minds. It was the rule, as it was in Ireland, and it was by no means uncommon to have spectators in crowds around the scene of a duel, if the greatest precautions were not taken to secure secrecy. In the present case, no such precautions had been taken, and the consequence was that the whole population of the city, that could get out, was on hand, at the hour named for the meeting, to see the fight between the two "Gringos." Public sentiment seemed to be quite apathetic about the success of either combatant, on the principle that they were both heretics anyway, and that the death of both would not be any calamity.

When the news spread, a little later, that the "Yanqui" was not a heretic at all, but an "Irlandese," and a good Catholic to boot, the sentiment changed, and the popular feeling was, that it was the proper thing to pray for the success of the Yanqui.

Promptly at the hour appointed, two parties of gentlemen made their appearance, and walked into the citadel, to the great disappointment of the crowd, who had fancied they were going to have a free show of the duel. The presence, very soon after, of the Governor of the city, with the captain-general and a large and brilliantly uniformed staff, explained the affair, and the people went away, cursing their luck and the Governor.

He wanted all the fun to himself, they thought, and in this they were not so far wrong. The Governor thought it incompatible with his dignity to preside over anything so democratic as a public duel. It was enough that he had to do it at the bull-fights.

Inside the citadel was a large court, and here the Governor paused, and in the most solemn and important manner, introduced the different parties to this strange affair to each other, and ended a stately address with the advice:

"Now, señores, it is the duty of a brave cavalier to fight at all times, and especially for his honor. The English cavalier has been hurt in his honor by the American cavalier, and the American has taken umbrage at words that have passed. It is your duty, cavaliers, to fight till the stain that has fallen on the honor of both shall be washed out with the blue and honorable blood that is precious to the king. You will strip and take your arms."

The two combatants were very nearly matched, both handsome men, as they took off their outer garments and showed themselves stripped to the waist, ready to begin. The weapons were swords, for the Governor would hear of nothing else, and the swords were of the Spanish make, nearly five feet long.

Each principal was attended by several seconds, officers of his own ship, and they saluted each other courteously as they met, before crossing swords.

Then the fight began, and ended in so short a space of time that the Spanish officers, who were looking on, involuntarily drew in a long breath of surprise and disappointment.

Only a single pass was exchanged, and then the English officer was run through the body, with a neatness and dispatch that had never been seen in Cadiz before. The Yankee had sprung forward at the very moment of crossing swords; struck up the blade of his opponent, and caught his wrist at the same time, passing his sword through Paget's breast with a dull thud that was heard all over the court.

Then he withdrew the reeking blade and stepped back, while the Englishman, with a hollow groan, fell on the pavement, and in a moment was surrounded by his friends and the surgeon, while the American, with a formal bow to the Governor, said:

"You will bear me witness that he brought this on himself, sir."

The Governor bowed, and the American turned to go with his friends, when the first lieutenant of the English Armada, who had come with Paget, stepped forward and intercepted him, with the remark:

"Sir, you have slain my captain in a cowardly and unfair manner, and I pronounce you a murderer, and demand satisfaction."

With the word, before Blakeley could imagine what he was going to do, he struck the American a blow on the breast.

Such a proceeding, in those days, when dueling was common, and the old practice of seconds fighting for their principals was not yet obsolete, excited no rebuke, though the Spanish officers shrugged their shoulders at the rashness of challenging a man who had already displayed such skill in fence.

Blakeley turned to the swords again and signed to his opponent to take one, asking at the same time:

"What is your name, before we fight, sir? I don't like to kill a man till I know who he is."

He spoke in a rather jocular tone, as if the killing of one man and the meeting with a second in two minutes were nothing but a jest.

"My name is Paul Harwood," was the reply; "and you shall see that I am up to all your foul tricks."

To the surprise of the whole court Blakeley threw down the sword that he had picked up, and said decidedly:

"I refuse to fight, then, except in my own way and at my own time. I will fight you on the seas, Mr. Harwood, and nowhere else."

Then, as Harwood, not knowing what to make of this sudden declination of hostilities, hesitated, he added:

"If you will visit me on board the Wasp, this evening, I will tell you why, sir."

"The why is easily known," was the scornful reply. "You are afraid and want to get out of it."

Blakeley flushed slightly as he answered: "You shall see if that is true to-night, sir. If you are afraid to come, say so and we shall know who is the coward. Good-evening."

Then he turned away, and, for some reason or other, Harwood did not follow him. The American officers gathered round their commander, as if they feared the repetition of the suddenly-given blow that had caused the trou-

ble, but the English did not attempt to repeat it and the Americans departed without further molestation.

That evening, after the sun had set an hour or more, the captain of the Wasp was informed that the person to whom he had promised an interview was in a boat, waiting by the gangway.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A RECREANT LOVER.

BLAKELEY went out to the deck, and saw the outline of a boat below the gangway of the Wasp, while there were lights at the stern windows of the Avon and Castilian, and their ports were open. His own men were not in their hammocks that night; for, in the ticklish position in which the Wasp found herself, it would never have done to relax in the slightest the vigilance that was their only chance of safety from the superiority of force to which they had been exposed ever since they had come into the harbor. Only the fact that the crews of the brigs were on shore, drunk, had prevented an assault long before, in one way or the other.

Therefore the men of the Wasp were all lying down, wrapped in their watch-coats, at quarters, and the guns were loaded and trained, to rake both the English brigs at once, if there should be visible any symptom of treachery.

The boat alongside, as far as could be seen in the darkness, was a large one, and full of armed men, but there were too many on the decks of the American ship to cause any apprehension on that score, as long as the brigs did not open fire.

The captain of the American ship came to the gangway, and hailed the boat:

"What do you want?"

The voice of the English lieutenant answered: "I have come, as you requested. How shall I know that you do not mean treachery?"

"The fate of your captain should have told you that when I say a thing I mean it," said Blakeley. "He came on board my ship, and I let him go, on condition that he met me, as he did to-day. If you come, you will be treated as he was, as a gentleman. Will you come or not?"

Harwood called back:

"If any treachery is contemplated, it will be the worse for you. The brigs are ready to open fire."

Blakeley laughed as he replied:

"I know that, and that is why I cannot see why you do not come at once. You run no risk, to what I do. For the last time, will you come or not?"

"I will come," was the answer, as if the Englishman was ashamed of further hesitation, and then he ascended the side of the ship by the gangway ladder, and stood on the decks by Blakeley, who said to him, with grave politeness:

"Be pleased to step into the cabin. I have something to say to you that no one else must hear."

Surprised at this exordium, Harwood followed him into the cabin of the Wasp, which he found empty of people. The captain motioned him to a chair, and opened the conversation with the words:

"Mr. Harwood, you are an Englishman; I am an Irishman, and the son of a rebel who was executed in 'Ninety-eight. Will you answer me a few questions?"

"Why, certainly," said Harwood.

"Do you know a young lady by the name of Rose Lynch?" was the question, to which Harwood, with a start that looked as if he was immeasurably surprised, answered:

"What is that to you, sir? I did not come here to be interrogated on my private affairs?"

"You promised to answer a few questions, sir," was the deprecating reply. "I have a reason for asking."

Harwood seemed to be strangely uneasy at the question, but he said, in a stiff sort of way:

"Well, sir, suppose I do, what of it?"

"I asked you whether you did," said the American, quietly. "Do you, or do you not?"

"I do," said the Englishman, in the same stiff way, watching the other as if he suspected something.

"So far so good. I am about to ask you another question. Is there anything between you and that young lady in the nature of an engagement, and do you know what is her real name?"

Now Harwood rose, and seemed to be angry, for he rapped out:

"Sir, you are proceeding to a line of questioning that I did not expect when I came here. I came to arrange with you for a duel, and not to listen to queries about things in which you, as a stranger, have no concern."

Blakeley allowed him to proceed till he had finished, when he answered him steadily:

"You are making a grave mistake. I have a right to ask you these questions, for I am the brother of the lady."

Had a shell fallen in the cabin, the lieutenant could not have been more astonished, as he stammered:

"You, the brother of Rose! It is impossible!"

"Nevertheless, it is the fact, sir. To the point. What are your intentions with regard to that young lady? I heard on board the *Seringapatam*, which I took but had to abandon the other day, that you had been constant in visiting a lady on that ship, with an ostensible view to marriage. Do you intend to repudiate the promise given to one lady, or are you false to both?"

Now indeed Harwood was completely staggered.

His face was quite pale, as he said:

"I don't understand you, sir. You say you are the brother of Rose Lynch. Is your name Lynch?"

"No, sir; my name is Blakeley. It was Blake, but in America it has been altered; and I have the honor again to ask you what are your intentions toward the lady I mentioned?"

Harwood hesitated, and there is no knowing what he might have said, when one of the state-room doors opened, and a young lady came out and advanced toward them, her face flushed with some feeling that made her eyes glitter like stars, as she said:

"It is enough, brother. This conversation need be carried no further. This gentleman is not bound to say anything against his will."

Harwood stared at her as she came in, and his face grew as pale as death as he recognized her.

"Rose!" he ejaculated. "In the name of Heaven, how came you here? I did not know—"

"That is quite true, sir," she retorted, looking him in the eye in the same scornful way. "I have heard all, and have heard you hesitate to acknowledge the truth. You can leave this place as soon as you wish. The girl that you have deceived is not so poor that she has need to beg for the keeping of faith."

Harwood looked at her in admiration. He had been a general lover, and had almost forgotten the girl who had been his sentiment for a time in London, but whose image had faded away in the excitement and change of a sailor's life. He had been thinking of running away with Minnie Moore when he got home, for the girl was evidently taken with his handsome face and figure; but now that he was confronted by the girl he had once loved, he felt for the moment that he would like to give up all for love, could he have afforded it. He hesitated, and at last said:

"Rose, we were children together, and we fancied that we were in love. But you know one thing—that it was all conditioned on the fact that I got my commission as captain. I am a poor man, and cannot afford to get married for many a year yet—"

She had listened quietly, but now her brother interposed in a way that showed him to be the coolest person in the cabin.

"That need be no obstacle, sir. If you are ready to keep your promise to the lady, the money shall be forthcoming. She is the heiress of the estate of Castle Blake in Ireland, and the Government will allow her to take possession thereof, she not having been included in the attainder passed against her father and myself. You will be a landed proprietor, if you care for that."

Harwood hesitated, but the natural sense of honesty in him triumphed over the spirit of deceit, and he said slowly:

"I must tell the truth. I have learned to love another, and I should be unjust to this lady and myself, should I try to keep the engagement to her. That is all I have to say, sir, except that I am at your orders."

The words had been spoken, and even Rose understood them. Blakeley gave her a look, and she instantly retired, while the American captain said to the other, in a low tone, that still showed no passion:

"You have been very frank, sir. I will ask you one further question. Has my present position, as the son of a man who was executed by your Government, anything to do with this determination?"

Harwood looked at the other in a singular way. The force of bitter prejudice appeared in his face, but he seemed to be struggling with himself, as he said slowly:

"Not entirely. Of course I could not marry a woman with a family blot like that—"

Blakeley interrupted him, to say, with the first appearance of irritation that he had yet shown:

"Be a little careful, sir. My temper is none of the best. You need say no more. Now for our meeting. I told you that I would meet you on the seas. I repeat the message. Go on board either brig of the two, and I will sail out of this harbor to night. Stop me if you can, and come after me if you dare. Good-night, sir."

So saying, he rose, and signified by his manner so clearly that the interview was over, that Harwood took the hint and rose with equal stiffness to say:

"As you please, sir. I do not belong to either of these brigs, but I shall take passage in one of them, if it be only for the pleasure of cutting your Yankee comb. You are brave enough when there are only peaceable Indianmen to fight; but,

when it is a question of brigs that carry the same number of guns as you do, it is a different thing. I shall do my best to take you at sea. Good-evening, sir."

The English lieutenant went to the door and back on deck, followed by the American, and was shown over the side into his own boat, with a stern civility that was ominous of the future, when the two met.

Blakeley saw him off, and then gave some orders to Winthrop, after which he descended to the cabin, and sought his sister.

She was not weeping, but sat there, with a face set as if she had been suddenly turned to stone.

Her brother went to her side and said softly: "Rose, are you angry with me, because *he* is a scoundrel?"

She cast her arms round his neck, as she said, in a manner that showed how strong a curb she was putting on her naturally warm feelings:

"John, it is all over. I am an American now. Oh, if the sea would only cover us all, how happy I should feel when the waters closed over me! Do not speak to me, dear. I will try not to disgrace you, but it is very—very—hard work—"

And here she broke down altogether, and burst into a tempest of sobs, which were hidden in her brother's breast. He said nothing for some time, till the violence of her first burst had abated, when he remarked as if to himself:

"It makes one more debt to England, and I shall never be able to pay them all; but this one I will. Rose, we are going to sea. Do you desire to go on shore and travel to London? If you do, I have provided a way."

She shook her head, as she answered huskily: "Not now, brother; I have but one wish left—to die."

CHAPTER XXX.

RUNNING TO SEA.

A soft and gentle breeze was blowing across the harbor of Cadiz as the captain of the *Wasp* came on deck the second time, after the departure of the English officer, and found the men of his ship at work, with a silence and order that showed how well they were held in discipline.

The two English brigs were all alive, and boats were passing to and fro from the shore, bringing cargoes of men, in all stages of drunkenness, to their vessels.

Battle-lanterns were flashing at every port, and the cabin windows were open, showing the officers at work in the brigs, helping the few sober men take down the bulkheads and turn the vessels into fighting machines.

The crew of the *Wasp* had nothing to do; for she had come into port cleared for action, and her sails were all ready to hoist. The only difficulty in the way of getting out, was that the English vessels might fire on her, as she was going, and Blakeley knew that they had no respect for the neutrality of the port to keep them from doing so, if they saw that they might so gain an advantage. To prevent this was his aim, and he took his precautions to that effect.

The *Wasp* was anchored between the two brigs, her broadside ranged on the stern of the *Avon*, and the bows of the *Castilian*. Had he wished to open fire on both at one time, he could have raked them so severely that they must have succumbed to the storm. If he relinquished the advantage, he would have to give them an opportunity, as he went out, to rake him, without any chance to retaliate, on his part.

To get out without giving them any such advantage, was his object, and he took his measures accordingly.

The ship was hove short on her cable, just as the tide was turning, and the *Wasp* was covered with canvas in less than five minutes from the time that her men began to haul on the capstan-bars.

No noise was permitted and the people of the brigs were watched closely all the time. Blakeley saw that they were busy pulling away the bulkheads, and that they would not be able to go to quarters in time to open fire.

As soon as the sails of the stately ship began to drop from the yards, the *Wasp* moved out of her berth between the two brigs, with a celerity that would have put her out of danger in another minute, when the captain of the *Avon* was heard, shouting to his men:

"Man the starboard battery, and give the Yankee a dose."

There was a great bustle on board the *Avon*; but, before the men could obey the order, the American ship had gained a distance of about two cable-lengths, and at the same time her broadside was swung round to bear on the *Avon*, when her captain hailed:

"Do you want to go into action, as you are? I am ready."

There was no answer, but the captain of the *Avon* was heard to call to his men:

"Avast with those guns, there."

Then came a taunting laugh from the American ship, and the *Wasp* glided from the harbor, and passed out in safety. The British brigs had been bluffed off, when they had the game in their own hands if they had known it.

The ship made the entrance of the harbor,

and the captain was just giving the order to heave to, outside, and wait for the enemy, when the tall sails of another ship, coming in, were seen in such close proximity, that she had nearly run them aboard, and there was only time to hail as they rushed by each other:

"Ship ahoy! what ship is that?" shouted a voice from the stranger.

"His majesty's sloop *Shark*," cried Blakeley. "What ship is that?"

The answer, as the other ship ran on into the harbor, was:

"His majesty's frigate *Trincomalee*. What are the—"

The rest was lost in the wash of the sea, and the flapping of sails as the *Wasp* hauled her wind and the two ships separated, the *Wasp* going out to sea, the other ship into the harbor.

As soon as they were at a safe distance, Winthrop said to his commander, in a very grave tone:

"That was a narrow escape, captain. Is not it rather too hazardous to go into these European ports, when the enemy's ships are swarming everywhere?"

Blakeley nodded in a thoughtful way, as he answered:

"You are right; but what are we to do? There is no getting anything in this world without risk. What a commotion there will be in that ship as soon as she gets in and finds out how we have fooled her! She is a twenty-eight. I have heard of her and have her tonnage and battery in my notes below. We shall have fun with her some day."

"I am afraid, sir, that the fun will be of a kind which our reason will not approve. We cannot fight a twenty-eight."

"There are twenty-eights and twenty-eights," replied Blakeley, in the same indifferent way. This fellow has only twelve-pounders, and a few twenty-four-pound carronades, and, if we take him at close action, we might have a chance to blow a hole in him. I shall try him as soon as I have smashed those brigs."

He spoke of it as coolly as if the job were already performed, and went below, with orders to the first lieutenant to keep the land under his lee at a safe distance, and not to stand off till the two English brigs hove in sight, when he was to be called.

Then the night passed in quiet; for there is no stillness so complete as the quiet of the sea.

It was one of those nights when the young sailor dreams of his girl at home, and the old salt thinks of the coming storm, concealed in the peaceful aspect of the waters and heavens.

That such was the character of the calm and equable weather was apparent in the lowering of the barometer in the latter part of the night, when the clouds began to gather over the heavens, and there was every symptom of the storm that was brewing.

The sun rose next morning in the midst of clouds that were fringed with white and yellow, but showed very little red.

The first glance of the lookout, as the light became sufficient to distinguish objects, was in the direction of the port of Cadiz, and the captain of the *Wasp* was awakened from sleep by the news that the two English brigs and the frigate of the night before were coming out of harbor together, with the evident intention of fighting the single American ship that was outside, waiting to meet them.

The news brought Blakeley on deck, and he surveyed the three sails through the glass, and then gave orders to put the ship under all canvas, and run out to sea to coax the enemy on.

The morning advanced, and with it the weather thickened. The sun went out of sight behind the clouds, that gathered every moment thicker and thicker. The wind rose and began to moan through the rigging, with that peculiar sound that is so ominous of the coming tempest. The shrouds of the *Wasp* acted like harp-strings to the wind, and the masts creaked and groaned as they swayed in their places to the rolling of the ship.

There was not enough wind yet to put her to topsails and reefs, but the sound of the shrouds was of that peculiar character that forebodes the violence of the storm long before it has come.

"We are going to have ugly weather, and the skipper is going to fight in the very middle of it," said Marion to Winthrop, as the two friends paced the deck and discussed the probabilities. "It is a tempting of Providence to fight in such weather. We are going to have what is very like a hurricane, only we are not in the right latitude yet."

Winthrop shrugged his shoulders in a rather rueful manner, as he replied to his friend:

"There is no trouble about that. The skipper is that sort of man that he is as likely as not to lead those Britishers into the hurricane latitudes on purpose to do what no one has ever done before. I tell you what it is, Marion, the skipper is a good officer and a first-rate sailor; but, between you and me, he is not altogether—"

And Winthrop touched his forehead significantly; at which Marion shook his head, saying:

"You are wrong there, Win. He is as sound

as you or I, but he has a past history that drives him to do all sorts of things other men never think of doing. He seems to have a singular spite against Englishmen, and he would rather sacrifice his own ship, if he could take two of theirs, than he would sail home safely and do as others have done before him, and good sailors too. But it is no business of ours, Win. We are the subordinates, and have only to obey orders."

The rest of that day the Wasp continued to hold her course to the southwestward, with the English vessels after her, and the sailing powers of the different vessels were thoroughly tested by the gradually increasing wind.

It was found that the American corvette easily outsailed all three, and that the Avon was the faster of the two brigs, while the Trincomalee could not keep her relative position with the rest without great difficulty.

Thus it happened, before dark, that the three English vessels were widely separated; the Avon being several miles ahead of the Castilian, and the Trincomalee at least five miles astern of the latter vessel.

The weather had become rougher than in the morning, and there was every prospect of a great storm.

It was under these circumstances that Blakeley gave the order, at about eight in the evening, to put the ship about and stand for the Avon.

CHAPTER XXXI.

ONE AGAINST THREE.

WHEN the Wasp had gone out of Cadiz, the breeze had been favorable for her departure; it had fallen nearly calm during the morning; the wind had shifted about noon, and now it was blowing from the southwest, a smart gale, with the clouds gathering thicker and thicker every minute; the sea rising faster and faster.

As the Wasp turned her head toward the nearest English vessel, the Avon was about five miles under her lee.

As Blakeley put the ship on her new course he beat to quarters and sent for his officers, to whom he made a short address.

He told them that he had determined to attack the English brigs in succession, and try to disable them and the frigate, so as to secure the mastery of the seas in that vicinity, for a space of time sufficient to sweep the prizes that swarmed in that part of the Atlantic, ready to reward the adventurous naval officer who had an armed ship to gather them in.

"We have already shown," he told them, "that we can destroy the English brigs-of-war that carry the same number of guns we do. The fate of the Reindeer shows that. The brig now under our lee is of the same force as the Reindeer, and the other is no stronger. It is my intention to fight the Avon, to sink her at the first broadside; and I depend on you, gentlemen, to make the action short, sharp and decisive. We are in a heavy sea. When we get close enough to the enemy to fire, I wish the broadside of the Wasp reserved till I give the signal. Then it must be aimed at the hull of the enemy, between wind and water, and every gun fired the moment that the signal is given."

"What will the signal be, sir?" asked Winthrop.

"Three short blasts of the boatswain's whistle. At the third the guns are to be fired, and the first and second are to aim low."

Then he dismissed the officers to their divisions, and took the deck in chief command himself.

Now the solemn moaning of the wind increased, as the ship neared the enemy, and it seemed as if Nature was sympathizing in the bloody drama about to be enacted.

It was not quite dark yet, for the twilight lingered long at that time of the year, and the outlines of the three vessels that were following the Yankee sloop were plainly discernible. The Avon was getting closer and closer, and the Wasp was bounding over the billows like a thing alive. In half an hour from the time that the first order had been given, the Wasp and the Avon were within a quarter of a mile of each other.

Then the English brig luffed into the wind, tacked, so as to show her stern to the Wasp, and ran off with the wind on her starboard quarter, as if to invite the other to follow her, if she dared. The maneuver was the best that could have been made under the circumstances, because it compelled the Wasp to go after her foe and fight her nearer to the English consorts of the Avon that were coming up astern, though only faintly visible in the increasing darkness.

The captain of the Wasp immediately ordered the topgallantsails set to close. He had reduced his canvas to the topsails and courses, as the wind increased, and had come down to meet the Avon under that fighting sail alone.

The effect of the topgallantsails was quickly manifest, for the ship began to gain on the Avon, sailing nearly two feet to her one, and doubling on her quarter so fast that the English captain hauled his wind and fired his whole broadside at the Wasp, with a quickness that did him but little service. The aim, in the ob-

curity of the night, was bad and, while the Wasp was hit by several shot, the damage done was too slight to cripple the ship. She continued to gain on the Englishman all the faster, because he had hauled up to deliver his broadside, and within five minutes more, was doubling on his quarter, within a cable-length, when the English captain put his helm hard apart, and brought his vessel round, to face the Wasp fairly, yard-arm to yard-arm.

The Wasp held her course steadily, and came driving toward the Avon, as if to run her down amidships.

Such was the hurry of the whole affair, the English captain had not had time to reload the guns that had just been fired, and his opposite broadside, which should have been the one exposed to the Wasp, was still idle.

For one anxious minute it seemed as if the two ships must come into collision, and the results could not be foretold. Both might be sunk, and the chances were that they would.

A heavy gust of wind at that moment sent the Avon ahead, and the Wasp, instead of running her down, passed by her stern, within fifty feet. All was perfectly silent in both vessels as they passed, the silence of expectation.

As the bows of the American ship passed the stern of the brig, a wave sent one vessel up, the other down into the trough of the sea. The Avon, for a brief moment, seemed to be perched on the the summit of a lofty billow. At that instant, a shrill whistle sounded above the groaning of the wind in the rigging, and three sharp blasts followed each other, in rapid succession.

The last was drowned in the simultaneous explosion of the Wasp's battery and the flashes of the guns lit up the scene for a single moment. In that moment the hull of the Avon appeared suspended in the air, and the crashing of timbers and the shrieks of men in deadly agony were heard. Then came darkness again, and, when the smoke cleared away, the Wasp was seen to leeward, luffing up again to double on her antagonist, while the Avon had her sails shaking, as if her crew had lost all control over her.

The English brig flew up into the wind with a velocity that proved some accident had happened, and then came driving, stern-foremost, on the Wasp, taken aback and ready to go down.

The American captain, seeing in a moment what had occurred, fell off and passed ahead letting the Avon drive past him to leeward.

The steering gear of the brig had been shot away by that lucky and well-timed broadside, and the Avon was helpless. It would be as much as her commander could do to save her from sinking, stern-foremost, and at that very instant of helplessness the Wasp fired her second broadside into the unresisting brig.

The effect of the second visitation was more serious than the first. The Wasp fired it in a raking position, from the bow, and the discharge brought down the foremast of the Avon.

Blakeley never stayed to ascertain whether she surrendered or not, but stretched off again to leeward to meet the Castilian, which was now coming up into the field of view of the night-glasses.

Winthrop, at his post in the waist, at the first division of the guns, uttered an exclamation of surprise, as he heard the order:

"Helm hard a-weather! Slack off the braces there; let her run!"

The Wasp, without waiting to repair damages, was going off to fight a new antagonist at once.

The Castilian came up, close-hauled, pitching heavily in the fast increasing sea, and, as she approached the Wasp, it could be seen that she was stripped to her fighting canvas, ready for the expected action.

The Wasp came down with the wind on her port quarter, and the two vessels passed each other at less than a hundred yards, exchanging broadsides as they drove by.

The fire of the Englishman was much heavier than that which had come from the Avon, and the crashing of timber that followed on the Wasp proved that the American ship was hit in more than one place.

The Wasp, as soon as she had passed, luffed up and went after the brig to engage her afresh, but the Castilian, instead of continuing the fight, stood off to succor her consort, which was now firing guns in a manner that seamen recognize as signals of distress.

"Run, by heavens!" muttered Winthrop to himself, as he peered through the drifting smoke to windward, and saw the Castilian vanishing.

Then came the orders from the quarter-deck:

"Helm a-weather! Let go the lee braces! Haul taut the weather braces!"

The Wasp, obedient to her helm, went round on her heel and stood off to the eastward to meet the Trincomalee.

That ship, which had fallen behind all the rest, a good three miles, was yet in sight, and the rate at which the Wasp was going speedily brought her to view, when Blakeley passed forward, uttering cheering words.

Then, having found that no serious damage had been sustained by the Wasp, as far as could be ascertained, he held his course to meet the frigate, which he knew to have a force greater than his own, by at least ten guns.

The night was growing darker and darker, all the time, and when the Trincomalee at last hove in plain sight, under the bows of the Wasp, it was blowing heavily.

With the stern decision that distinguished his character, the American captain held his course toward the strange frigate. Already they were within a quarter of a mile, when the Trincomalee fell off from the wind, and fired her broadside at the Wasp. The reports of the guns were light, and the sound of the shot as they hurtled by the ship, was almost lost in the howling of the thickening storm. There was a crashing in one place, but no sign of damage appeared in the rigging or spars of the Wasp.

The American ship was close to the English frigate soon after, and delivered her broadside at pistol-shot distance.

It was fired when the frigate was quartering on the sloop, and had a raking effect. The reports of nine thirty-two-pounder carronades in rapid succession, boomed out, and the foremast of the British frigate fell into the sea, as if it had been struck by lightning. Blakeley uttered an exulting cry, echoed by a wild yell of triumph from his crew at the sight, and the Wasp again hauled her wind and crossed the bow of her crippled antagonist, so as to give her the other broadside. This time it was a fair rake, and the crashing of the carronade shot, as they made havoc in the upper works of the Trincomalee, showed that the frigate was getting the worst of it, notwithstanding the superiority of her force.

This second broadside was even more destructive than the first, and sent the mainmast of the frigate to follow the foremast.

Blakeley made no stay to see what further damage might be done, but hauled his wind a third time, and stood off to the offing, after the two brigs. He had a hard struggle, for the wind had now become a perfect gale and the sea was rising so fast that the ship had to be stripped to her close-reefed topsails.

She pressed to windward as fast as she could, but the prospect of finding the English brigs became every moment more and more doubtful. The radius of vision only extended the space of the ship's length on any side, and, after a hard fight to get to windward, the search was given up, and the Wasp settled herself for a struggle with the storm, that had now fairly burst. The guns were secured, the watch set, and the captain sent for the boatswain to get his report of damages sustained in the action.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE LAST PLUNGE.

THE moment that the face of the worthy warrant-officer of the Wasp appeared in the cabin, the captain saw that something was wrong. Mr. Macy's face was as pale as death, yet he was one of the bravest of the Nantucketers who formed the best part of the ship's crew.

"What is the matter? Any of the masts hurt?" asked Blakeley, with a steady voice.

The boatswain shook his head, and answered, in a husky whisper:

"It ain't that, sir. The ship's doomed. She won't float another hour."

"Why not?" asked Blakeley, in the same tone, and betraying no excitement at the news.

"There's a hole in her, under the floor, sir, and we can't get at it. There's six feet water in the hold, already, and God have mercy on our souls is all that I have to say."

"How did it come, think you?" asked Blakeley.

"That last ship, sir. God forgive us for temptin' him. It was only one shot, I guess, that hit us, 'way down, as we rose on the sea, by the keel. It ain't much, sir; but it's enough. She's a-goin' sure, and the sooner we get to the boats the—"

"Stop!" interrupted the captain, with such stern emphasis that the boatswain colored deeply and hung his head. "As long as one plank of this ship floats, Mr. Macy, I command her, and when I need advice I will ask for it. Call all hands and tell Mr. Winthrop I want him. Send the men to the pumps at once. Time enough to despair when all is lost."

Then, as the boatswain retired, Blakeley went to the state-room where he knew his sister must have heard all, and asked her, as she came out:

"Did you hear it, Rose?"

She came to greet him, with a face that had on it a strange light as she said to him, softly:

"I heard him, and I am ready to die with you. Did I not say I had a presentiment this voyage would end in death and disaster?"

"It may end in death," he interrupted, "but the time for disaster is past, Rose. This night I have worsted three English men-of-war, of equal and superior force to my own ship, and, if we sink now, we shall not die un-avenged."

Rose actually smiled on him, as she answered:

"It is better so, dear."

Then came a hurried knock on the door, and Blakeley called out:

"Come in."

Winthrop came in and saluted, saying:

"Captain, there is no time to lose. The ship is settling fast. The men talk of breaking into the store-room and getting drunk. What shall we do?"

The captain's face flushed slightly, as he said: "I will attend to them. Go on deck, sir, and keep order till I come."

Winthrop obeyed; and the exiled man folded his sister in his arms, saying solemnly:

"It is for the last time, Rose. Now let us face death together."

She nodded her head, as if she understood what he meant, and they went on deck. It was easy to see something had happened to shake the iron bands of discipline.

All hands were on deck, and there was a hoarse murmur as the captain appeared, which told that trouble was imminent.

When they saw the lady with him they hushed, and the commander of the Wasp shouted through the speaking-trumpet:

"All hands lay aft! I have something to say to you."

There was an instant rush of the excited sailors abaft, where they confronted the captain, in the midst of the howling storm, crowding as close as they could get to catch what he was about to say to them.

Already the motion of the ship was getting heavy and labored, and the incessant clang of the chain pumps disturbed the speaker.

For all that he persevered, and the men heard the greater part of what he had to say.

He reminded them that they had come to sea to die, if need be, and he told them that the time to die had come.

"No human power can save us," he said, solemnly, "and the work at the pumps only puts it off for a little while. The question is: How will you die? Will you die drunk, and stamp yourselves forever as cowards, afraid to look death in the face, or will you show the world the last lesson that you can show—that Americans are not afraid to look death in the face?"

There was a dead silence at that, and he continued:

"I would send you to the boats, but you can see for yourselves that no boat would live in this sea. It is a question of how to die, and I depend on you to show the world that you are the men who have beaten every ship you have met, and are afraid of nothing in this world or the next. Hark!"

The flash of the lightning over the sea revealed in the distance two brigs close together, and as they looked another vivid flash showed them that one of the brigs was going down.

"We have sent our enemies before us," said the captain of the Wasp; "and, if we go down, this ship has cost the British Government two brigs-of-war already. The fortune of war is against us at last, and we cannot complain. All hands to quarters, and let us go down with the colors flying. To quarters!"

Such was the influence of the bonds of discipline and the manner of the man who had led them so often to victory, that the sailors of the Wasp dispersed mechanically to their quarters, and the rows of silent men around the guns could be seen by the flashes of the lightning, as the Wasp plunged through the seas with a motion that was growing heavier and heavier.

The clang of the pumps was as steady as ever, and the men went to relieve each other as regularly as if they had been machines, while the sail-trimmers attended to their duties as if nothing had happened; but all the while the doomed ship kept settling and settling, and the sullen moan of the storm through the rigging had changed to a wild shriek, as if the demons were exulting over the fate of the Wasp.

The brother and sister, clasped in each other's arms, watched the sinking of the ship with countenances calm as if they were on a pleasure voyage. At last the men at the pumps stopped work, with a sullen unanimity that was ominous. They saw it was useless, and the captain made no effort to drive them back.

It was enough that they had to die, and he was only concerned that they should die like men.

The ship had already settled so far that the wash of the waves could be heard in the lower decks, under the hatches, which had been battened down as the last precaution.

The storm raged wilder than ever, and the faces of the men, as revealed by the occasional flashes of lightning, were ghastly pale, but had a firm look, as if they were staring at death and trying to show what stuff they were made of.

At last came a wave that dashed over the bulwarks of the ship, so that the men at the guns were up to their knees in water.

Then Blakeley turned to Rose, and said to her in a low voice:

"Do you forgive me, child?"

"For what?" she asked.

"For bringing you here to die."

She turned her face to his, and kissed him tenderly saying:

"I thank you for it, brother. The old name will perish; but we shall live after it is gone. God be thanked, to-night, that the end has come at last."

He gathered her up in his arms, and at that moment another sea washed over the taffrail of the Wasp.

A vivid flash of lightning illuminated the scene, and Rose saw the whole of the ship at a glance.

The sailors at their guns, as stiff as if at parade; the officers at their posts; not a man flinching; not a sound of wailing in the ship; the Wasp swept on to her doom.

Then the voice of Blakeley pierced the air:

"Men, three cheers for the old flag! We go down, but that flies forever!"

There, in the midst of the storm, with death around them, the sailors united in a cheer, and then, as if by one consent, every gun in the ship went off in a grand salvo.

It was the last shot ever fired from the Wasp. Ere the echo of that despairing broadside had faded away from the clouds, the ship took a plunge and went down, head-first, into the sea.

The last part to go was the quarter-deck, and the last people who saw her were the brother and sister, clasped in each other's arms.

As they went down, both smiled and said:

"It is not hard to die."

THE END.

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